

DEATH OVER CHICAGO By ... **ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS**

Fantastic **ADVENTURES**

JANUARY
20c

**SEE
BACK
COVER**

**The
ROBOT
PERIL**
By **DON WILCOX**



THE TIME MERCHANT By **F. A. KUMMER, Jr.**

6 COMPLETE STORIES 8 BIG FEATURES

Stop your Rupture worries and look Younger!

Wouldn't it be a grand and glorious feeling to forget rupture worry completely and let peace of mind and new zest for living make you look younger? But you can't if a gouging, uncomfortable truss nags you constantly, if you never know a moment's security, if you feel your rupture is growing worse all the time, with not even hope of the opening closing up. Worry, worry, worry, day after day, for all your life . . . why, it's bound to make any man or woman look old, haggard, and worn out beyond their years.

Don't, don't, don't submit to this terrible, needless tragedy of dragging, ageing worry. At this very moment, as you read these words you can


decide to enter upon a glorious new life. Not by some clap-trap, senseless "magic"; but by the thoroughly effective aid of the world-famous BROOKS Patented AIR-CUSHION Rupture Support—that holds with a velvet touch; yet so securely that you practically forget rupture, banish worry, become normally active and again know the zest and joy of life that *cannot help but make you look younger*. Scores of thousands know this is true. Let the Brooks help you.

A BROOKS APPLIANCE WILL BE SENT ON TRIAL TO PROVE ITSELF ON YOUR OWN BODY

BROOKS asks no man or woman to buy a Brooks Appliance outright, on *faith alone*. Instead it will be sent you on a *skin-over trial*. Wear it. Put it to every test for heavenly comfort and security. If you or your doctor are not satisfied, return the BROOKS and the trial will cost you nothing. So if you have reducible rupture send for a BROOKS Air-Cushion truss and let it *prove itself on your own body*. How doctors regard the BROOKS is shown by the fact that more than 9,000 have ordered, either for themselves or their patients.

LOW COST . . . AND THE AIR-CUSHION Support Gives Nature a Chance to Close the OPENING

Rich or poor—ANYONE can afford to buy a BROOKS. But look out for imitations and counterfeits. The Genuine BROOKS is never sold in stores or by agents. It is made up, after your order is received, to fit your particular case. The Patented Air-Cushion Support does away completely with hard, gouging, painful pads. There are no stiff, punishing springs. Instead, the yielding, clinging, secure AIR-CUSHION and velvet soft body band. Sanitary, lightweight, inconspicuous. No metal girdle to rust or corrode. And the Patented Automatic AIR-CUSHION continually works to give Nature a chance to close the opening. What a contrast to ordinary hard-pad uncomfortable trusses!

- 
- A—Pad which comes in contact with the body.
 - B—Light weight disc which holds pad.
 - C—Shows the shape of soft rubber pad before it is pressed against body.
 - D—Dotted line shows how the pad fastens out under pressure, expelling air.
 - E—Orifice through which the pad figuratively breathes as it adjusts so conform to different body pressures.

Brooks Rupture Cushions are made in over 75 Shapes and Sizes.



X—Where Is Your Rupture?

MAIL COUPON NOW!

Brooks Appliance Co.
452-B State St., Marshall, Mich.

In PLAIN ENVELOPE, please send your FREE BOOK on Rupture, PROOF of Results, and TRIAL OFFER. No one is to call on me personally about my rupture.

Name

Street

City State

State whether for Man ☐ Woman ☐ or Child ☐

Learn How To Look YOUNGER—Send for FREE Rupture Book and TRIAL OFFER

No . . . don't order a BROOKS now . . . FIRST get the complete, revealing explanation. How the BROOKS securely holds reducible rupture is made as clear to you as ABC. Why rupture worry ends is utterly plain. How the Patented AIR-CUSHION Support gives perfect security with *heavenly comfort* is shown at a glance. Learn how you can be fitted individually for any kind of reducible rupture. THEN you'll never rest until you wear a BROOKS, prove its advantages on your own body. And remember, if not satisfied, the TRIAL is at OUR risk, NOT yours. Don't pass up an opportunity like this.

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.

452-B STATE STREET

MARSHALL, MICH.

Read How These Men Got Better Jobs

THEN FIND OUT WHAT RADIO OFFERS YOU

Mail Coupon



AFTER COMPLETING 20 LESSONS I OBTAINED MY RADIO BROADCAST OPERATOR'S LICENSE AND IMMEDIATELY JOINED STATION WABC WHERE I AM NOW CHIEF OPERATOR.

HOLLIS F. HAYES
227 MADISON ST., LAFAYETTE, MISS.



I WAS WORKING IN A GARAGE WHEN I ENROLLED WITH N.R.I. I AM NOW RADIO SERVICE MANAGER FOR M. FURNITURE CO. FOR THEIR 4 STORES.

JAMES E. RYAN
1543 SLADE ST.
FALL RIVER, MASS.



N.R.I. TRAINING-HELPED ME GET AND HOLD MY JOB. I AM NOW IN CHARGE OF THE RADIO DEPARTMENT FOR THE AMERICAN AIRLINES AT CLEVELAND.

WALTER B. MURRAY
AMERICAN AIRLINES
AIRPORT, CLEVELAND, OHIO.



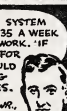
THANKS TO N.R.I. TRAINING I AM FOREMAN IN A RADIO FACTORY. I AM MAKING MORE MONEY AND HAVE TWO N.R.I. STUDENTS HELPING ME.

OTTO CLIFFORD
312 N. SENNARY ST.
CHARLOTTE, N.C.



MY LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEM PAYS ME ABOUT \$35 A WEEK BESIDES MY RADIO WORK. IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR YOUR COURSE I WOULD STILL BE MAKING COMMON WAGES.

MILTON F. LEIBY, JR.
TOFTEN, PA.



I EARN \$10 TO \$25 A WEEK IN SPARE TIME AND ALWAYS HAVE PLenty TO DO. ONLY TRAINED MEN CAN FIX RADIO SETS NOWADAYS. I OWE MY SUCCESS TO N.R.I.

WILLIAM F. RUPP
611 GREEN ST.
BRIDGEPORT, PA.

I will Train You at Home for RADIO and TELEVISION

Radio is a young, growing field with a future, offering many good pay spare time and full time job opportunities. And you don't have to give up your present job to become a Radio Technician. I train you right at home in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installation and service men. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make \$30, \$40, \$50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make \$5 to \$10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, police, aviation, Commercial Radio; loudspeaker systems, electronic devices are other fields offering opportunities for which N.R.I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open good jobs soon.

Many Make \$5, \$10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your course I send plans and directions which have helped

many make \$200 to \$500 a year in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

Find Out What Radio Offers You Act Today! Mail the coupon for my 64-page Book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those com-

I HAVE BEEN IN BUSINESS FOR MYSELF FOR TWO YEARS, MAKING BETWEEN \$200 AND \$300 A MONTH. BUSINESS HAS STEADILY INCREASED.

ARLIE F. FROEHNER
300 W. TEXAS AVE.
GOOSE CREEK, TEX.



ing in Television; tells about my course in Radio and Television; shows many letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 94M,
Washington, D. C.

MAIL NOW! Get 64 page book FREE



J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 94M,
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Send me FREE, without obligation, your 64-page book, "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out Radio's opportunities and tells how you train men at home to be Radio Technicians. (Write plainly.)

NAME AGE

ADDRESS

CITY STATE

Fantastic

ADVENTURES

VOLUME 2
NUMBER 1
JANUARY
1940

Contents

STORIES



Deep in the earth were things no man could look upon without shuddering, then they came up from their world to the world of daylight, into New York. Coming Next Month



Copyright, 1940
ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
608 South Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.
William B. Ziff, Publisher
B. G. Davis, Editor
Raymond A. Palmer, Managing Editor
Herman R. Bollin, Art Director

We do not accept responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. To facilitate handling, the author should inclose a self-addressed envelope with the requisite postage attached, and artists should inclose or forward return postage. Accepted material is subject to whatever revision is necessary to meet requirements. Payment for manuscripts and illustrations will be made at our current rates.

The names of all characters that are used in short stories, serials and semi-fiction articles that deal with types are fictitious. Use of a name which is the same as that of any living person is accidental.

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES
JANUARY 1940
VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is published monthly by ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY at 608 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill. Entry as second-class matter applied for at the Post Office, Chicago, Ill., under the act of March 3rd, 1879. Subscriptions \$1.20 a year (6 issues); Foreign, \$1.70.

- THE ROBOT PERIL.....by Don Wilcox 6
Blaine Rising and Marcella Kingman were aghast when they discovered the meaning of the word Stupide in this world of 150 years from now
- DEATH OVER CHICAGO.....by Robert Moore Williams 30
High over the Loop district a glowing ball hung. And down below, in the City streets, Death lay a heavy hand as uncanny invaders descended.
- THE TIME MERCHANT.....by F. A. Kummer, Jr. 48
Pete Howell was baffled by the strange tricks time played on him in the valley. Why was pain so short-lived and pleasure so strangely extended?
- CAPTIVES OF THE VOID.....by R. R. Winterbotham 58
John Deno and Aaron Cleef planned to sleep centuries, but they didn't want to sleep until time's end. They awoke to find the universe gone
- HELL IN EDEN.....by Richard O. Lewis 64
Mel Heyden's cavern held an amazing miniature world in its depths; a world where the entire scale of evolution was repeated all over again
- THE GIFT OF MAGIC.....by Miles Shelton 76
All the magic skills of genius were offered for sale by the Hindu Wizard. But he who would buy selected blindly, trusting reward to chance

FEATURES

- The Editor's Notebook..... 5
- Fantastic Hoaxes..... 28
- Romance of the Elements..... 57
- Introducing The Author..... 84
- Quiz Page..... 86
- Readers' Page..... 87
- Prize Contest..... 92
- Correspondence Corner..... 94
- Life On Jupiter..... 97

Front cover painting by H. W. McCauley illustrating a scene from "The Robot Peril"

Back cover painting by Frank R. Paul

Illustrations by H. W. McCauley, Julian S. Krupa, Robert Fuqua, Rod Ruth, Joe Sewell, Jay Jackson

The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

WITH this issue FANTASTIC ADVENTURES begins a new year. 1940 promises to give us a lot of swell yarns and it's on this January issue (incidentally the first of the monthly editions you've been calling for) that we base that assumption. Just take for instance Don Wilcox's great story on a theme that is rather old, but which has never been done so expertly before. Here is a story that has an element of human drama far ahead of anything we've seen to date. It has emotional punch besides being a swell scientific fantasy.

BUT that's not the only yarn in this issue that gives us an idea of how good 1940 is going to be. Robert Moore Williams starts off the new year very auspiciously with "Death Over Chicago," one of the most convincing "invasion" yarns we've had in many a month. It takes place today, right in scenes we can picture without difficulty. And maybe that's why Kummer's time yarn "The Time Merchant" hits the spot as a follow-up. Here's a time yarn that *isn't* about time travel! You don't believe it? Well, read it and see. And speaking of time travel, have you ever heard of "entropy-travel"? No? Well, then don't miss R. R. Winterbottom's "Captives of the Void." He's hit on something a bit different from the usual run of stuff, and it's a character bit into the bargain.

WITH all these old favorite authors mentioned, maybe you think we haven't got anything new on tap? Well, we have. We've got two new writers in this issue. Richard O. Lewis has authored one in *Amazing Stories*, but this is his first in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. It's an evolution yarn, and a good one. Then we've got Miles Shelton, who is keeping pace with Lewis, by duplicating his performance, also writing his second science fiction story. And here's an unusual one. It's about a Wizard who has gifts of magic to bestow. It's a fine bit of fantasy, and if you think it's not, you'd better heed our warning, and read it for sure. You'll not regret it.

OF course, we've got our usual departments, and they are especially good; for instance, the Fischer Hoax, featured this month in *Fantastic Hoaxes*. It really happened, the hoax, we mean, and you'll find it a very interesting expose indeed written by a special scientific investigator.

YOUR editors have been receiving a lot of comment on our covers lately. Paul, in his back cover series, has unanimously been acclaimed as doing the best work of his career. We've also tried to give the readers "covers to frame" in presenting this series so that type can be trimmed off (in most instances) where desired.

BUT it's not on the back covers (always popular) that the readers have been commenting. It's the front. Now, after a careful study of your letters, we've reached some very definite conclusions. The cover on the last issue was the first example of the sort of thing you seem to like best, and this month we present what would seem to be a cover bound to make you open your eyes. We feel that it is the best cover FANTASTIC ADVENTURES has presented to date and we'll let you'll like it!

MAYBE you've noticed the constant mention by the fans of a 1940 science fiction convention in Chicago? Well, maybe some of you don't know that last year, a convention was held in New York that proved interesting enough to warrant a two-column write-up in *Time*. Your editors are continually being amazed by the unusual enthusiasm and display of action on the part of readers of science-fantasy. Certainly there are no others like us, and we predict that the 1940 convention is going to be one that will further demonstrate that. Your editors just *might* be hinting here that we'll welcome the fans and help them all we can in their activities. Our readers' page and correspondence corner is wide open to you.

THE war in Europe is still raging. Poland is no more, and those mighty fortifications, the Maginot and Siegfried Lines, still frown at each other beneath the thunder of big guns. But somehow, we are reminded of Stanton A. Coblenz' many satires in science-fantasy. Because through it all, there is an air of unreality, and artificiality. It has been an actual satire of action. It isn't a battle for ideals, the clash of armed forces in thrilling (though primitive, uncivilized) conflict. It's a false face behind which move unreal, hypocritical men "toying" with destiny. In short, it's not "war" but a science-fantasy story being written by an author with his tongue in his cheek.



"Gas? What do we want with gas?
We want a road map. We're lost."

H. W. McCauley, who painted the cover on this issue, paints from actual photographs. And here's the interesting part of it. Most of the characters he depicts are *himself*! He poses himself in the attitude of the character he wishes to depict on the cover, and then adapts the features to the description given in the story. But your editor can recognize him every time, and it gives him an uncanny feeling of reality, because the man on the cover is *real*! Our November cover was a good example of this technique.

LAST issue, the voting on the Story Contest was especially heavy. The opinions expressed were generally unanimous in the verdict that our stories have reached a new high in quality. This makes your editors feel mighty happy, because we attribute it

directly to our story policy, which underwent so much controversy on the part of our readers. We predict that from now on, more and more stories will fall into that category described among fantasy fans as "classic."

WE received a letter the other day from England, from each of two of our most popular writers, Thornton Ayre, and John Russell Fearn. They had two definite things to say: We are determined to stick by our guns in this war, and we are determined to turn out better and more science-fantasy. Well, boys, all we can say, is that we hope all the bombs fall far from your typewriters and that you stick by us with more of those grand stories.

AND with that we'll say "until next time." We'll be back in the February issue with another fine bunch of stories. We might just hint at Phil Nowlan, Bertrand L. Sbuttleff . . . oh boy! *Rep.*

The ROBOT PERIL

By DON WILCOX

Blaine Rising, Marcella Kingman, and Jimmie Brayton were delighted with this world 150 years in the future—until they discovered a ghastly industry that made robots of humans—and then Jimmie disappeared!

WHEN Blaine Rising came to life in the year 2089, he was amazed by the new world he found. So was his sweetheart, Marcella Kingman; not to mention Jimmie Brayton, the fourteen year old office boy, who was thrilled to his shoe-strings.

All three had emerged from a century and a half of temporary death in a pit of absolute zero, into which they had been hurled by a mad experimenter.

All three had been employed by one of the most extensive and widely renowned science laboratories of the twentieth century. Working together, they had devised a method of preserving living animals for many years in a frozen sleep. But they had never suspected their incredible destiny until the trapdoor leading to the awesome pit had opened beneath their feet. And now, scientists of another era had revived them.

Nineteen hundred and thirty-nine was past and gone. Here was a new life, swifter, more adventurous! At first the pace made them dizzy, but the scientists of this new age were at their side, to help them adjust.

In fact, for several weeks the world of science clamored for them. They were conducted over America and Europe, were toasted and interviewed by scientists, historians, reporters. Their tour wound up at Pravianna, one of the great scientific centers of Europe. Pravianna, the cultural and commercial capital of the Central European Confederation.

It was a good place to stop. A gentle old doctor named Ravenstein insisted that his commodious house was to be their home as long as they would stay. For the present, they accepted his hospitality.

He was a most agreeable host. Curiously, he never invited his guests to go through his private laboratories which adjoined his home, nor did anyone else ever enter those sacred recesses. Such privacy was certainly the doctor's privilege. Blaine dismissed it from his mind.

Blaine and his associates were glad to be settled. They needed a springboard from which to plunge into this new life. They were unwilling to be made into museum pieces. Their lives were before them. They must anchor to new purposes.

"We've got to learn fast to catch up," Blaine declared. He and Marcella had been active scientists in the previous century. "Otherwise we'll be three old fogies, in spite of our youth."

"Three Rip Van Winkles without the whiskers," said Jimmie Brayton. He was raring at the bit for adventure. Those silvery futuristic towers of downtown Pravianna tugged at him like a magnet.

Usually there was merriment in Marcella's dark liquid eyes, but Dr. Ravenstein caught signs of hidden apprehension.

"What are you afraid of, Miss Kingman?" he asked her in confidence. His face was kindly, sympathetic.

"Blaine," she answered simply. Then, to the doctor's bewilderment, she explained her fear that there was hatred buried in Blaine's heart that would have to come out somehow—hatred engendered by the mad experimenter who deserved murder, and might have got it, had he not been on his death-bed, living in a more horrible suspension of life in poetic justice when Blaine found him. His bones had been dissolved by a strange hormone and he lived on, an incredibly odd mass of helpless flesh.

Would the flame die out, or lurk to blaze up at some unexpected time and place?

The doctor reassured her. He was a keen judge of



Savagely Karnaire lashed Blaine with the whip

The ROBOT PERIL

By **DON WILCOX**

Blaine Rising, Marcella Kingman, and Jimmie Brayton were delighted with this world 150 years in the future—until they discovered a ghastly industry that made robots of humans—and then Jimmie disappeared!

WHEN Blaine Rising came to life in the year 2089, he was amazed by the new world he found. So was his sweetheart, Marcella Kingman; not to mention Jimmie Brayton, the fourteen year old office boy, who was thrilled to his shoe-strings.

All three had emerged from a century and a half of temporary death in a pit of absolute zero, into which they had been hurled by a mad experimenter.

All three had been employed by one of the most extensive and widely renowned science laboratories of the twentieth century. Working together, they had devised a method of preserving living animals for many years in a frozen sleep. But they had never suspected their incredible destiny until the trapdoor leading to the awesome pit had opened beneath their feet. And now, scientists of another era had revived them.

Nineteen hundred and thirty-nine was past and gone. Here was a new life, swifter, more adventurous! At first the pace made them dizzy, but the scientists of this new age were at their side, to help them adjust.

In fact, for several weeks the world of science c'admored for them. They were conducted over America and Europe, were toasted and interviewed by scientists, historians, reporters. Their tour wound up at Pravianna, one of the great scientific centers of Europe. Pravianna, the cultural and commercial capital of the Central European Confederation.

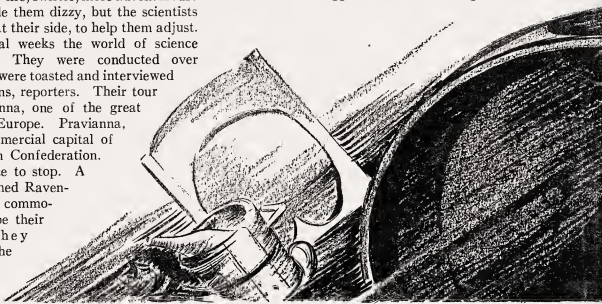
It was a good place to stop. A gentle old doctor named Ravenstein insisted that his commodious house was to be their home as long as they would stay. For the present, they accepted his hospitality.

He was a most agreeable host. Curiously, he never invited his guests to go through his private laboratories which adjoined his home, nor did anyone else ever enter those sacred recesses. Such privacy was certainly the doctor's privilege. Blaine dismissed it from his mind.

Blaine and his associates were glad to be settled. They needed a springboard from which to plunge into this new life. They were unwilling to be made into museum pieces. Their lives were before them. They must anchor to new purposes.

"We've got to learn fast to catch up," Blaine declared. He and Marcella had been active scientists in the previous century. "Otherwise we'll be three old fogeys, in spite of our youth."

"Three Rip Van Winkles without the whiskers," said Jimmie Brayton. He was raring at the bit for adventure. Those silvery futuristic towers of downtown Pravianna tugged at him like a magnet.



Usually there was merriment in Marcella's dark liquid eyes, but Dr. Ravenstein caught signs of hidden apprehension.

"What are you afraid of, Miss Kingman?" he asked her in confidence. His face was kindly, sympathetic.

"Blaine," she answered simply. Then, to the doctor's bewilderment, she explained her fear that there was hatred buried in Blaine's heart that would have to come out somehow—hatred engendered by the mad experimenter who deserved murder, and might have got it, had he not been on his death-bed, living in a more horrible suspension of life in poetic justice when Blaine found him. His bones had been dissolved by a strange hormone and he lived on, an incredibly old mass of helpless flesh.

Would the flame die out, or lurk to blaze up at some unexpected time and place?

The doctor reassured her. He was a keen judge of



Savagely Karnairo lashed Blaine with the whip

character. "If Blaine Rising harbors such a hatred, he'll put it to a good use, not a bad one. Pent up feelings give rise to some of the noblest reformers. And besides, fate has already exacted revenge."

BLAINE and Marcella were married. The ceremony was simple, much simpler than the red tape connected with securing a license. To such searching questions as "When did you first contemplate matrimony?" Blaine could only answer, "One hundred and fifty years ago,"—but Dr. Ravenstein was on hand to straighten out all difficulties.

Jimmie Brayton, not wishing to stand in the way of a honeymoon, took the money offered him by Blaine, his chosen guardian, and set out to discover the world for himself. The money had been advanced by a science foundation to give the three a new start in life.

As the lad coasted along on the moving sidewalks through the heart of the glittering, softly humming metropolis, Blaine Rising's words echoed in his ears. "Don't adventure too long, Jimmie."

Jimmie's eyes glowed with boyish enthusiasm as he watched his reflections flash along the facades of black glass, while the moving sidewalks carried him in and out of vast buildings. How many boys, he wondered, could resist the temptation to adventure too long if suddenly tossed into this new world of magic?

How many could resist blowing in a pile of money on one of these little red gyroplanes that hopped so nimbly from one rooftop to another? Or one of these blue bullet-nosed cars that skimmed so silently over the elevated trafficways? Or one of these protean robots that gleamed through their transparent shells as brilliantly as the insides of a fine watch, and promised to do all your drudgery for a few cents per day?

But Jimmie had no drudgery to do, no highways to follow, no rooftops upon which to land. He clung to his money. In time he would need it, no doubt. He saw the wisdom of Blaine's advice. He would not adventure too long. Only a month. Then, according to his promise to Blaine and Marcella, he would return to Dr. Ravenstein's to meet them there.

"One month from today." That was his parting promise, and he and Blaine had shaken hands on it before he struck out.

"Blaine doesn't know me very well yet," thought Jimmie, "but he'll soon learn I'm the kind of guy that never breaks a promise."

The cafeteria door opened for him, a mechanized voice greeted him and asked for his wraps, one mechanical arm took his cap, another presented him with a notched hat check, a voice directed him to the aisle that moved gently past the food counters.

"Watch your step, please," came a mechanized voice, just before he reached the moving aisle. He paused before the electric eye that governed the voice.

"Watch your step, please . . . Watch your step, please . . . Watch your step, please . . ."

He chuckled. More good advice. He'd watch his step all right. He knew the game of self-reliance.

He had been an orphan from an early age, had worked hard, played square—

"I'm the kind of guy that never breaks a promise," he repeated to himself as he enjoyed a delicious lunch. Then he pondered. What kind of person would he be in this new world?

He was changed already. Here he sat, wearing these gaudy abbreviated summer clothes—the curious fashion of the times, eating tasty foods that must have been invented for kings, listening to weird sounds that were meant for music, fascinated by dizzying mechanical devices on every hand. Here he sat, trying to peer into this new life that was too dazzling for his mind to penetrate.

One thing he saw clearly, however. In all this fairyland of glittering power, nothing should keep him from *making good* for Blaine Rising. It would take work and study, but he would do it. Blaine and Marcella were determined to find themselves in this new world of science. He would follow in their footsteps, make them proud of him.

"I'll visit factories and mines and laboratories," he vowed to himself, "and when my month is up, I'll start in school where I left off a hundred and fifty years ago, and take up science in earnest . . ."

AT the close of their month of honeymooning, Mr. and Mrs. Blaine Rising returned to the home of Dr. Ravenstein.

"No, Jimmie hasn't returned yet," said the doctor, "but I've kept in touch with his banker. He has cashed only his second travellers' check."

"Where was it cashed?" Blaine asked.

"At Danoba, one of our suburbs, twenty miles south."

Blaine was satisfied. "He'll be back tonight or tomorrow. I felt sure, when I let him go, that he'd be able to take care of himself."

The doctor was eager to hear Blaine's and Marcella's appraisal of the modern world. At dinner he questioned them. Reexamined through their eyes, commonplace things took new significance. The robot, for instance.

"I'm delighted," Blaine declared, "to see how important the robot has become. We found them at work in vast numbers."

"Robot Manufacturing is our fastest growing industry."

"In my day we were never optimistic about the robot's prospects," Blaine confessed. "I thought it would never be more than a glorified mechanical toy for the amusement of a few people. But a century and a half makes a great difference."

Dr. Ravenstein glowed, for he was proud of his own robot and he loved to describe its many uses. "It's an eighty-seven model—not strictly up-to-date, but good enough for our purposes. I don't believe in trading them in every year, as some do."

At the touch of a button the robot rolled into the room. It was an obelisk of noiseless power, as tall

as a man, riding on silent rubber wheels.

Marcella and Blaine had seen it before, and hundreds of others like it, so they showed no surprise as it extended a collapsible shelf for their plates. This was customary. A moment later it returned laden with the desserts, then wheeled back into the other room.

"But I thought robots would look like men," Marcella protested.

"Marcella is quite disappointed," her husband explained with a laugh, "because they don't have a closer resemblance to human beings."

"Some resemblance is inevitable, but many early models strove for more than was practical," Ravenstein explained. "Their modern form has been determined largely by their functions. It is their efficient service, not their romantic appearance, that makes them sell by the millions."

Blaine saw the point. "Wheels are better than feet for most locomotion."

"Right," said the doctor, "but of course they also have suction feet to use when needed. They're a marvelous composite of machines—easy to set for a new task—and their combinations are almost unlimited. Man has only two hands; the robot has many."

"Then I presume," said Blaine casually, "that no one could persuade you to exchange your robot for a stupode?"

DR. RAVENSTEIN colored. Why this remark should cause an intense feeling to rise within him was more than his guests could understand. After a moment of awkward pause he said, "So you've bumped into stupodes."

"Yes," said Blaine, puzzled by the doctor's strange manner. "We bumped into them—"

"Literally, in fact," said Marcella, "or rather, they bumped into us. It was in the station as we started on our tour. We had never seen any before."

"Personally, I don't care if I never see another," said Blaine crisply. The doctor's silence on this topic was again noticeable. Was it possible, Blaine wondered, that this kindly old doctor had something to do with the strange de-humanized forms called stupodes?

Another embarrassing silence, but Marcella came to the rescue. "In fact, we had never heard of them. We're still curious to know what brand of bird, beast, or fish they are."

"What did they look like?" the doctor asked, as if to probe their feelings further.

"Like any other human beings," said Marcella; "but they wore crazy black and white stiff collars—and very dumb expressions."

"There were three of them with this party of travelers," Blaine explained, "and all three wore high checkered collars. Otherwise there was nothing distinctive about their clothing. They seemed to be porters. They marched along, loaded down with luggage, followed by some wealthy looking gentlemen who strutted like so many oriental potentates. I

didn't care for their airs. We stepped to one side to view the procession, but one of these checkered collars strode right into us with no more manners than a blind horse. No excuse for it, and I told him so."

"You doubled your fists," said Marcella excitedly.

"I admit I had a rash impulse to hit him when he didn't even turn to apologize, but one of these big shots shouted, 'Don't strike him! He's only a stupode!' That was the first we knew of them."

The doctor nodded noncommittally. "You have to make allowances for stupodes. They're not responsive; they simply follow directions."

"We saw others from time to time," Marcella added, "and they all had a very stupid look. The checkered collar is evidently a standard identification."

"The very sight of them is highly repulsive," said Blaine, while his wife nodded her agreement, at the same time wondering if their outspoken opinions offended their host.

"The Stupodes Corporation has put them on the market quite recently, and it is perhaps too early to say whether they will be a success," said Ravenstein dryly, "but if you find them repulsive to the sight, that may be because you aren't adjusted to some of our ways in this new century."

"I'll never adjust to a return of slavery. I thought we were past the age of traffic in human flesh and blood." Blaine saw no reason to pull his punches.

"Correction," said the doctor, whose manner grew increasingly reserved. "Stupodes are not legally human."

"Not *legally human*! What do you mean?" Blaine flushed with anger.

"The standards for being human have raised in the past century. The Central European Confederation has seen to that. Since the Uplift Act of a few years ago, a segment of the population has been removed to an Uplift Colony in Africa. They were the mentally unfortunate—usually with glandular deficiencies—creatures who were found to lack the intelligence or other requirements necessary to be human beings, as defined by the act of the Confederation. Now the Uplift Colony supplies raw material to the Stupodes Corporation, whose plant is also in Africa."

Blaine roared with indignation until his wife clutched his arm and reminded him of his manners.

"The democratic ideal was strong with us," she apologized, "so you'll have to forgive us if we can't appreciate—"

"But it's not only the democratic ideal," Blaine continued, "it's the responsibility of science—medicine—eugenics! Why, in God's name, should there be any persons without full capacities for intelligence and—"

He stopped short. Ravenstein eyed him so intently that he came down to earth with a thud. After all, he was not onto all the ropes of the new century. He was in no position to slur the progress of medicine or insult this gentle doctor who was his host.

"Your perspective is unique, I grant," the doctor

said in a cool, even tone. "Just what did you expect of medical science?"

"I didn't expect it to betray unfortunates who are born with low mental capacities or other tendencies to become inferior. Even in my day—" Blaine caught himself glorying in the promise of science of the earlier century, "medicine had made a great start through the study of glands and the chemical synthesis of hormones."

"Yes," his wife chimed in. "In our own laboratories we learned to reverse the 'peck order' in a flock of hens—you know, treating the last hen, that all the others pecked, so that it became first and could peck all the others."

The doctor smiled at the mention of this familiar classic. "The stupode is the last hen, generally speaking, but the Stupodes Corporation means to keep him that way, not change him. The medical advances have been employed to standardize his dull wits so that he bends readily to his master's needs."

"It's an outrage!" Blaine blazed. "A prostitution of science!"

"You are welcome to your own opinion; however, before you declare war on the stupode industry, or even declare your opinions too dogmatically, perhaps you should know your grounds more thoroughly. I propose that we have a salesman drop in some evening this week and demonstrate the wares of the Stupodes Corporation. Perhaps we shall change our minds."

"Very well," said Blaine, but in his heart he knew he would never condone human slavery, even though whitewashed by the name of science.

CHAPTER II

Lost, Strayed, or Stolen—Jimmie

THE stupode salesman was engaged to come two days hence. The Risings waited eagerly. In the meantime their troubles thickened.

In the first place, Jimmie Brayton did not return. Marcella grew worried. Her husband had agreed to be legally responsible for the lad. Was he stuck with a fickle child who would prove a burden?

Blaine did not think so. He liked the boy too much to believe he had gotten into trouble. Doubtless it was simply the novelty of things—the freedom, money, adventure. Enough to make any boy forget to come home. Give him time.

Had Blaine known the contents of a letter Dr. Ravenstein carried, his complacency over Jimmie would have shattered. But the doctor absent-mindedly forgot the letter. Blaine became preoccupied with the stupode movement.

A reformer's zeal suddenly flamed within him. It hurt him to see civilized people drift into such a deplorable practice. The more he read of the industry, the more he burned to fight it. Marcella shared his indignation.

In their eyes it was a treacherous menace, spread-

ing like slow poison through the life blood of the nation. Had it been fire or a disease or a visible disintegration of buildings and crops, the people would have howled for deliverance! But it was far more insidious than any such spectacular destruction. Stealthily it gnawed at the fibers of democratic society, made pitiful victims of the very people science could help most, planted the seeds of an evil caste system.

"We've got to fight it!" Blaine declared over and over again.

"Then we'd better break off from Dr. Ravenstein at once," Marcella concluded. "Our decision may embarrass him. There's something mysterious about his connections with stupodes. He knows how we feel, but still he never says a word. I'm afraid we've spoken out of turn. If we expect to fight the stupode movement, we'd better learn all we can about it and hold our tongues."

ON the evening of the demonstration the Risings were ready. They would play the game of prospective buyers, pretend approval, and hide their bitter feelings.

The doorbell rang.

"That must be Mr. Falliman coming to show us a stupode," said the doctor, setting his coffee aside. "I'll have the robot show him in." His hands skipped over the portable keyboard—a sort of miniature typewriter in appearance—to direct the marvelous machine by remote control.

The robot rolled through the front hallway to open the door, greet the guest and his stupode in Dr. Ravenstein's own voice, dispose of their wraps, and show them into the reception room. Soon Marcella, Blaine, and the doctor joined them.

A few words of acquaintance, and the sharp-tongued little salesman plunged into his well practiced demonstration speech.

"This fellow's name is George."

His audience studied the stupode in wonderment, while that sluggish creature stared, dull-eyed, at nothing in particular.

"He is typical of thousands we have ready for the market," said the sleek little Mr. Falliman. "No intelligence, no sentiments, no curiosity, no sex appeal."

George remained expressionless. His head leaned slightly to one side, rested upon the stiff black and white checkered collar that clasped his neck. He was a big fellow and Falliman enjoyed demonstrating his strength.

Dr. Ravenstein stood well to one side. The good humor was gone from his face, now flushed with unspoken feeling. He breathed heavily as he witnessed the spectacle of a helpless stupode being put through the paces.

"He never wears out," Falliman boasted. "Even if he did, he'd keep on working. He doesn't have the nerve to disobey." He slapped the stupode across the cheek to prove his point. "See? No feelings. I've lashed George with a horsewhip, and he didn't mind.

Did you, George?" Falliman sneered cynically.

A weak smile registered on the timid face. George winced a little and uttered an answer in slow, plaintive words. "I minded a little—but—" He could get no farther.

"But you couldn't help yourself," Falliman cut in. The stupode nodded and blushed. His demonstrator carried on proudly. "There's the answer to the world's labor problems. You can't excel a stupode for cheap, efficient industry—and no back talk! Teach him a hand skill, give him a place to sleep and eat, lock a checkered collar around his neck so he won't get mixed up with human beings. There you've got it. The solution to human drudgery in a nutshell! Mechanical robots can't compare—"

"Are you selling lots of them?" Blaine asked.

"Confidentially," Falliman said, "this is the fastest growing industry on the continent. And of course it's only in its infancy. We're trying to hold back to avoid arousing any unfavorable public sentiment. We choose our clients with care. But we've already sold to a few of the richest and most prominent persons in the country. I venture to say that within two years—" The spokesman concluded with a sweeping gesture; his prospects were too great for words.

"I presume they have a great many uses," Marcella ventured.

"Unlimited!" said the salesman, and he loosed another volley of oratory. "A most important angle. They are available not only for general manual labor and monotonous factory jobs, but also for a host of specialized needs." He gave numerous illustrations, explaining that various glandular treatments gave them certain desired characteristics.

"For example, we have a special class of stupode which we call the cringer. Now, George, here, is not a cringer, are you, George?"

The big childish face twitched slightly as Falliman yanked at the hair and slapped the cheeks. Blaine, standing close beside Marcella, felt her shudder.

"But we could make a cringer out of George if the purchaser preferred," said the stupode salesman blithely. "It's all a matter of taste, you know. Some people like to see their subordinates wince, and some don't. Or we could make a weeper out of him, though we don't often have calls for weepers. However, one of the most exclusive mortuaries in this city purchased a number of weepers, and they are giving splendid satisfaction. They don't wear the regulation collar while on duty, of course. They are trained to mix with the mourners and friends to lend perfect atmosphere. But, speaking of the regulation collar—get down on your knees, George, and let's take a look at your collar."

The big helpless creature obeyed.

"This trick serves as a protection for both humans and stupodes. It's an identification the owner can put on or take off at will; but the stupode can't remove it."

"Why not?"

"It's too complicated. It requires five motions to

unlock. His mentality doesn't reach that far."

"But his manual skills—" Blaine protested.

"The wise owner never teaches him how to work it." The demonstration went on over the back of George's neck. One simple motion to lock, five to unlock. Blaine practiced, and the motions quickly became automatic for his skillful fingers. The others practiced, too, while Falliman talked on. He told the history of the development. The government had given the Stupodes Corporation a special franchise, with exclusive rights to the growing population of the Uplift Colony. Perfect raw material. The corporation's scientists were privileged to grade and sort and treat these creatures who had been adjudged non-human under the Uplift Act of '65.

FALLIMAN turned to the doctor. "Being a physician, you no doubt remember that the Uplift Administration combed the country for qualified scientists to carry on the movement."

Ravenstein's lips drew down. There was a sharp clash of eyes between him and the salesman, who rambled on.

"A great thing for the human race! Onward and upward to higher standards. A continual purification. The schools keep the program moving. They cull out the dullards and the freaks, and send them down to the Uplift Colony. In fact, the colony was getting crowded until the Stupodes Corporation thinned them out. It was the human thing to do. That patch of territory down on the African coast is pretty dreary, even for non-humans. It's better to convert them into domestic animals and put them to use. And what a demand! Already our business is world wide!"

"I think it's wonderful!" Marcella managed a convincing tone.

"This is all new to us," said Blaine, "because we've been out of touch with American life for some time. But we are professional scientists ourselves. We want to learn more about this movement—perhaps have a share in its destiny—"

The enthusiastic Falliman was sure he could help them make the right contacts. They must attend the forthcoming National Stupodes Show, to be held in this city. He could arrange reservations for them. The great Karnaire himself, president of the Stupodes Corporation, would be there. Perhaps they could meet him—

Falliman left with no sale but with a full head of enthusiasm. George had performed perfectly. His good manners were at last automatic. He would not have to be horsewhipped tonight.

As their footsteps echoed away, the little group in the reception room sat and stared in silent rage. Blaine was a bombshell of indignation. But it was the doctor who exploded.

"I can see you haven't changed your minds," he said, looking from one to the other. "You hate this stupode industry as bitterly as ever."

The Risings studied their host's fiery eyes. They

had not seen this round, baldish, good-natured doctor show his fighting face until this moment. They nodded, held their tongues.

"All right! Let me tell you something," The doctor was on the edge of his seat. "Blaine Rising, from the instant you first spoke of stupodes, I knew you were the man I've been looking for—to lead the movement against this human curse!"

Marcella gasped. The scales fell from Blaine's eyes.

"I didn't state my position before," Ravenstein continued, "for I didn't want my prejudices to influence you. But I've been proud every minute for the staunch stand you've both taken." He shook them by the hands. "I've tried to fight this thing," he went on, "but I'm too old, and leadership needs the magnetism of youth. But you've got everything, Blaine,—energy and courage and idealism—and a talented wife to help you. The medical world is already interested in you because of your sensational return to life."

Visions rose in Blaine's mind as the doctor continued his spirited rhapsody. "I've fought a losing game, Blaine, but you may win where I've failed. You won't be alone. There are thousands of individual doctors over the country who, even though despondent, are ready to join the fight. They know—as you and I know—that stupodes could be made normal men!"

"Then why—"

"Because we're hamstrung—shackled by laws—bidden to use hormone treatments on human patients without a special license—and who gets a license? Only those few doctors who sell their souls to a political party—the Uplifters—who swept into the capital on a wave of fanaticism! For the last quarter of a century the Uplifters have played steam roller politics. They've saddled laws on the Confederation that no self-respecting doctor or eugenicist or educator could condone!"

"But the doctors who sell their souls for licenses—?"

"They carry on their outrageous experiments in the privacy of the African laboratories—on handsome salaries. There you have it—politics at its worst—the nation too comfortable in its modern mechanical luxuries to be bothered—and the unfortunate tenth of the population due to be dressed down as stupodes and whipped into slavery!"

BLAINÉ paced the floor. The doctor's fighting face cooled. He watched the young man before him eagerly. Here was decision in the making. With swift action this menace might be nipped in the bud, though the steam roller gained momentum every hour.

"But why should the Uplifters want these things?" Marcella asked. "Why, with such wonderful robots to do man's work, do they need stupodes? Do they really think they are raising the standards for being human?"

"Bosh!" roared the doctor. "It's nothing but highly organized snobbery. There are always some people who can't enjoy life unless they are trampling some of

their fellow humans in the dust. Here!" The doctor drew some papers from his inner coat pocket. "Look at some typical Uplifter propaganda."

He spread the papers on the table, and Marcella caught the title, "The Social Distinction of Owning Stupodes."

"Oh, by George!" the doctor suddenly shouted, picking up an envelope from among the pamphlets. "Here's something I forgot! Come here, Blaine!"

The envelope contained a note from the banker concerning Jimmie Brayton's travellers' checks. There were the notations copied from each check, which the banker thought might be helpful in tracing the missing boy. Blaine and the others poured over the information.

The first check was cashed here in the city, "For instruction in operating robots, and cash."

The second, given at Danoba, a suburb: "For enrollment fee, Danoba Technical School, and cash."

The third, of recent date, was simply marked, "For Cash." It was given at Uplift Harbor, Africa.

"Africa—!!" Marcella gave a startled cry. Fear struck home with the thrill of an electrocution.

Blaine broke for the telephones, dialed one, gave the receiver to the robot, dialed another, tapped off the seconds with tense fingers. Marcella looked on through frightened eyes, while the doctor sank to a chair and clutched his head, mumbling apologies for forgetting he had the letter.

"Don't worry," said Blaine. "I'll get to the bottom of it. The boy may simply be adventuring, but he's worth better care than I've given him— Marcella, if I have to make a trip, I want you and Dr. Ravenstein to attend that National Stupodes Show—get all the information you can—contact the big shots. We've got a fight on our hands—as soon as we find Jimmie!"

"Blaine, dear, you'll be careful, won't you—"

Long distance from Africa. Swift service this hour of the night. Blaine put his questions sharply. An anxious moment of waiting. Then—

"I'm sorry, but we do not know Jimmie Brayton. If he has been here, we have no record . . ."

Failing to get any lead, he reluctantly hung up. Another call sounded through the robot's speaker—the African Laboratories of the Stupodes Corporation. Blaine pleaded for information but got none. The Corporation would reveal no names, answer no complaints, make no special investigations, accept no visitors. Blaine hung up in a rage.

He tried to reach the president of the corporation, who was thought to be in his Pravianna office, but without success. The great Karnairre could not be found at this hour of the night. The next best bet was a crisply delivered night letter which would overtake him by tomorrow.

In the meantime Marcella dialed a suburban call, and Blaine took the phone.

"Yes, Jimmie Brayton enrolled with us," said a secretary of Danoba Technical School. "He was very anxious to get started in science—"

"Where is he now?"

"Unfortunately he had no credentials, and his story was most fantastic . . ."

"But where is he?"

"You'll have to call someone on the examinations staff—"

The examinations official came back with icy but informative answers. "You are aware, Mr. Rising, that the Uplift Act requires that certain intelligence and achievement tests be given a student enrolling in a new school. Brayton proved to be deficient in mentality. He excelled in only one field—the ability to operate a robot. Beyond that he demonstrated vast ignorance. He was confused about his own age, and he couldn't even name the last three Confederation presidents. Our school is no place for him. We had no legal alternative but to turn him over to the Uplift Court. I'm sorry, we cannot make any exceptions . . ."

At last the telephone operators found the judge of the local Uplift Court, whose stony words turned terrified suspicions into cold, hard fact. Blaine slammed the telephone down, white with anger.

"Help me pack, quick! I'm flying to Africa at once! They've got Jimmie!"

CHAPTER III

Stupodes in the Making

J. KARL KARNAIRRE loved importance almost as much as wealth. He never strode into the offices of the Stupodes Corporation unaware of the rich bonanza that lay before him. His, by the virtue of swift wits, smooth manners, and a shrewd tie-up with the inner ring of Uplifters. His, by virtue of *grasp*.

With business booming, a national show for this city just a few days ahead, and a favorable editorial on stupodes in the morning paper, the great Karnairre reminded himself that he was Central Europe's man of the hour. Here in Pravianna he maintained his sanctum sanctorum, keeping his finger on the public pulse, and directing the African Laboratories by remote control.

His secretaries, alert with respect for his domineering personality, gathered about him with their day's problems. They waited in silence while he settled his huge body back of the silvered ebony desk. Then, from the flash of his dark eyes and the haughty thrust of his trim black beard, they knew he was ready to shoot decisions right and left.

"Who's first? Blittstein!"

"Mr. Karnairre, our African office reports that our increased sales will shrink our reserves within a year, unless we can bring the raw material in faster."

"I'm working on that," the huge man snapped in his brittle voice. "I've got the Confederation hatching a law to cut deeper into the civilian population as well as the schools. Tell the laboratories that. They can put the present raw material into stupode collars as fast as possible! We won't run out! Next!"

"Mr. Karnairre—"

"Speak up! Speak up!"

"The Uplift Colony tells us they are besieged with inquiries on cases for whom they have no records. They suggest it might be better if they had a chance to at least register their new inmates before we shunt them to our laboratories."

"No!" the president roared with a jump of his pointed black beard. "Needless waste of time! The fewer records, the better! It's the easiest way to kill complaints! Next!"

"Mr. Karnairre, the salesmen are still continually faced with the same question from customers: Shouldn't the stupodes be de-sexed?"

"The answer is still, NO! Our pituitary treatments retire all social impulses. We've yet to have a single case of social misbehavior. Tell your customers that. Further operations are unnecessary. But remember, if you ever find an exception to our clean record, report it at once! Next!"

"The salesmen also have occasional calls for female stupodes—"

"Tell the customers not this season. Perhaps later. But don't tell them why. The facts are, we must wait for public sentiment to mellow; furthermore, at the rate we're expanding, we may soon need the best women inmates of the Uplift Colony to provide us with regular new raw material. Next!"

"I'm sorry to bring it up again, Mr. Karnairre—"

"Out with it, Judson!"

"I have some very urgent inquiries about cases we've taken. From relatives and friends who demand—"

"Demand, *nothing*!" Karnairre howled. "We never answer complaints! Never! Never!"

"But here's one from a prominent scientist, Blai—"

"No! No! No!!!" Karnairre's great fist slammed the table. "We never tell anybody anything! The law's behind us. That's good enough! Why get into personal tangles? If you weaken once more on that point, Judson, I'll wrap a stupode collar around your neck! Any more business?"

A FEW thousand miles to the south Jimmie Brayton leaned with his back against a wall of natural rock. A chill breeze swept along the foot of the coastal mountains—it was winter farther south—but the rock ledge was warm and the tropical sun was generous.

Jimmie was hungry. None of the eight or nine thousand creatures imprisoned in this pen could be any hungrier than he. His eyes burned. He was almost too sick to keep on guard. But he was still Jimmie Brayton, not a stupode. They hadn't caught him yet.

Hunger and burning eyes were the price he paid to keep from being overtaken by the officials who moved through the pen to fell the daily harvest—officials popularly known as Knockouts. The dreaded Knockouts carried deadly hypodermic needles. When they slipped up behind you and pierced you with their needles, you dropped off to sleep in your tracks. Later, you woke

up in the laboratory, but before you got out they converted you into a stupode.

The Knockouts might have got Jimmie five minutes after he first arrived, if it hadn't been for Tony. Tony had been here for months and knew the ropes. He knew the Knockouts followed no system in selecting their victims, and that was worth knowing from the start. Tony was a pal.

The Knockouts simply plowed through the sluggish crowd wherever it was thickest, injected the potent serum indiscriminately. Then a corps of trained stupodes would follow through with stretchers to pick up the ones that dropped, cart them off to the laboratories.

A large majority of these men and boys were pitiful, simple creatures. They had no conception of hovering danger. But there were all grades, and many freaks who fell into no class whatever.

A few, like Jimmie and Tony, were sensitive to every move of the Knockouts. They knew that eternal vigilance was the price of avoiding stupode-hood. These few had ganged together, devised warning signals, stood guard for each other while they slept. They passed their nights outdoors near the perpendicular wall of rock, avoiding the ghastly sleeping halls where danger always lurked.

However, the Knockouts occasionally changed their tactics. That was why they finally got Tony. They waited just inside the doors of the dining halls and touched their needles to the incoming procession. A few days after that began, the vigilant gang passed out. Some were caught, a few went mad from worry, and Jimmie decided to go it alone.

HE tried to keep his wits sharp, but now hunger and fatigue dragged him down. All his fanciful schemes to beat this game wore down to vague animal cravings.

A sweet mess! And to think he'd come out of a century and a half of ice, only to be snatched up for this. It was nauseating. Yet in all this agony nothing stung deeper than the feeling that he had failed Blaine and Marcella!

He wished now, he'd bought a robot instead of enrolling in school. The tons of fun he could have had! The one he learned on was a nifty. It had everything. Press here, and it reached. Press here, and it turned on the voice records that were hidden within it; or press there, and it took a talking movie of everything before it. And all at the same time it would roll along, or jump, or cling, or lift and deposit—the recombinations were unlimited. Jimmie would never forget how he amazed his instructor when he discovered how to make his robot tie a four-in-hand tie. There was an art to working those keyboards, and he'd begun to find it.

Gollies! If he only had one of those mechanical men here! How it would tear through that barbed wire fence or clamber over this smooth-hewn stone embankment.

"H-s-s-st!"

Jimmie cocked his ears, scanned his surroundings for Knockouts before looking up. He knew that hiss. Joe, the beggar. His tousled head peeked over the crest of the ledge.

"Brought you somethin'," he called in a low voice. A paper sack dropped down into the pen. Jimmie caught it, dived into it, ate like a starved dog.

"You're a pal, Joe!" he gasped between bites. The money he'd passed through the fence from time to time had proved a lucky investment over and over. This heap of rags was no common chiseller. He claimed he used to be a guide in these desolate regions before the Confederation mapped the land for a colony. He was starved for companionship, and Jimmie had won him, heart and soul.

"You take too many chances," the boy called up to him. "The guards will get suspicious and toss you in, and the Knockouts will get us both."

He craned his neck to see whether his warning registered. Joe sat like a bronze statue. His clothes were good camouflage against the brown surface rock. At that moment another brown face appeared over the ledge—the long, comical face of a pack mule.

Jimmie gulped. "What the sam hill—?"

"But you wish to escape."

"Of course, but—"

"Then come on. All is ready. I have Chumpo loaded with food."

Jimmie blinked, turned his wistful eyes toward the formidable barrier of mountains and back to the comical face of Chumpo. A magic carpet couldn't have jolted him any more suddenly. He realized that to escape the way he had come was out of the question. He would never get beyond Uplift Harbor, then back he would come in handcuffs to his eventual fate. But the mountains—and this curious old beggar—it seemed like a dream.

Or was it the answer to a dream? Somewhere beyond those tortuous trails lay the Plegungdo and Traable Railway that led to Debenz, an airport.

"Joe!" he breathed excitedly. "Do you mean it? Do you think we could do it?"

A rope slithered down the wall. Jimmie's eyes cast about in terror. "Careful, Joe. If a Knockout saw us—"

"They won't," Joe grumbled. "They're all watchin' the fracas over by the gate. I came by a couple minutes ago. Some stranger was tryin' to argue his way in, to look for someone, and he was right handy with his fists. I see they're still going it," his keen eyes glinted into the distance, "so now's time for get-away."

Jimmie would have preferred darkness, but he recalled the searching spotlight that combed the grounds by night. He looked far across the pen, saw that a first rate commotion was in progress outside the gate. A huddle of guards struggled to control a berserk figure without success. Joe was right; the Knockouts wouldn't miss a show like that. There would never be a better moment to skip. With these

lightning thoughts, Jimmie seized the rope, bounded up the wall.

"Darned lucky if we get away with this!" he panted. They scouted over a knoll and dragged Chumpo after them. One parting backward glance told them the fighting stranger had won his point, for they saw him leap over the gate into the pen. Joe said he had a gun.

Only when the prison was many miles back of them did Jimmie's nerves quiet down enough to let him be curious about the incident.

"Wonder who the stranger was, and who do you suppose he was after?"

Joe shook his head. "No difference. The Knock-outs were waiting. His ill fate, your good fortune."

CHAPTER IV

Checkered Collar Parade

THE National Stupodes Show!

The greatest display of stupodes the world had ever seen. Stupodes of all grades and specialties on demonstration in their respective booths. Stupodes doing all kinds of drudgery—feeding machines, heaving bricks, pasting labels, swinging mauls.

A colossal show in the arena afternoon and night with checkered collars by the hundreds. Through the vast auditorium bands blared, crowds cheered, colored lights flashed in splendor. Training demonstrations, stunts of dumb strength, exhibitions of obedience and cringing and weeping and taking punishment, endurance treadmills until the stupid creatures collapsed from exhaustion—such was the glorious spectacle provided by the great Karnairre.

"STUPODES FOR SALE ON THE PREMISES."

The sign flashed gayly over the entrance to the merchandise rooms. There sat rows of collared creatures, placarded and tagged. Laborers already skilled in this or that; house servants with minds too weak to remember conversations and bear tales; audience packers and political ralliers trained to look attentive and applaud upon signal; stuntmen ready to run through flames or leap from towers in blind obedience to commands.

And how they sold! Toward the final days of the show Karnairre sent a rush order to the African Laboratories for more merchandise.

It was no wonder he gloated. Public sentiment continued to bend in his direction, an obeisance to his canny genius. The yapping of his enemies was drowned out by the clink of inpouring shekels.

No need to worry about that case that would go to the Superior Court a few weeks hence. Most of the judges saw straight on these matters. And there were plenty of insurmountable proofs that the stupodes were *not* human, by modern standards. The Court would put its okay on that, and stupode commerce would roll on without a wobble. And he would get a lot of free publicity.

Yes, Karnairre told himself, unquestionably he was the nation's man of the hour. He could order life to his own taste—and he did! Champagne parties every night. New females to tease his fancy with their laughter and beauty.

And by the way, that was a lovely new number he'd added to his guest list for tonight. A bit shy, but desperately beautiful. Champagne and laughter and his own ready bawdy wit would break down that cool reserve. What was her name? Oh, yes—Rising—Mrs. Rising. He *should* remember, for she had frequently attended the daily receptions, following the afternoon shows, in which he and his officers presented themselves to the public.

The three airliner loads of new stupodes trudged into the arena. The huge black-bearded industrial magnate capered through his inspections, fairly floating on inflated importance.

"They're perfect!" he exulted. "Perfect! Go ahead and put them into the afternoon show. Don't forget to send me a dozen of the handsomest for my roof party tonight. My guests like to buy them for souvenirs. That's all. I'm off for the day."

THAT afternoon Marcella and Dr. Ravenstein sat in their usual places down close to the great arena. Watching the show had been dreary business for them from the first. Now it was sheer mockery. They were desperate for news of Blaine and Jimmie.

Blaine hadn't communicated since his second day in Africa. At that time he had fought his way into the offices and demanded information on Jimmie. There was no record of the boy. But Blaine, sure he was on the trail, had finally received a half-hearted permission to comb the place. He would call as soon as there was any news. In the meantime they must carry on as planned.

All that was weeks ago. Now Dr. Ravenstein held a tight grip on himself to keep from telling Marcella his terrible fears. She was a courageous thing, so fearless she would have gone in pursuit of Blaine days ago, had the doctor not dissuaded her.

"He'll be back, don't you worry. He's probably collecting some valuable information and doesn't dare call for fear of being suspected—"

"But he could write!"

"Yes, of course," the doctor admitted, "that is, if he isn't too busy. Yes, he really ought to write—" What was the use? His arguments were worn out and the girl knew it. Something terrible had happened; there was no sense in trying to kid themselves out of it. Most wives would have suffered a breakdown. Marcella held on with steel nerves.

She pinned all her hopes on one strategy—a direct appeal to the great Karnairre. If that failed—but it must not! Tonight she would face him, win his friendship, implore his help.

"If you're determined to keep that engagement tonight, I'm going with you," the doctor declared.

"Thank you," the girl breathed.

Then an announcement blared from the loud speakers. The audience hushed, listened.

"Now entering the arena from the south end—a company of brand new stupodes, 2090 models—(applause)—just arrived from the African Laboratories—for your approval! (Applause.) They embody all the latest achievements in stupode cultures. They will now parade around the arena for their first public inspection. (Applause.) Lieutenant Braba, winner of three medals for the training of cringers, wields the whip!" Applause.

The whip cracked. The procession trailed into sight trudging single file. An endless line of colorful uniforms, black and white checkered collars, expressionless faces. Somewhere a military band cut loose with a lively number.

Around the arena the stupodes moved. Now and then the lash fell on a laggard, who would yelp and jump back into time.

The drummer in the band, with a flare for the dramatic, watched for Braba's whip to descend, so he could smash out a cymbal crash in time with a stupode's jump. He achieved a comic effect with every crash. The amused thousands responded with ripples of mirth.

But comedy and tragedy are often close together. A minute after the drummer's fun reached its height, a strange tragic atmosphere descended upon the scene.

IT began inconspicuously. A few spectators noticed that a lovely girl, who sat beside a baldish, professional looking old man, suddenly rose to her feet. Her dark liquid eyes were intent upon a certain part of the parade, as if fixed upon one stupode. The rather large handsome creature parading directly before her seemed to be the magnetic core of her fascination.

Her terror-struck manner shocked the crowds close about her. The elderly man clutched at her hand, gasped, "Marcella! What's the matter—?"

The girl did not hear. She was not aware of the presence of anyone—human or stupode—except that one creature, a handsome specimen with a pale, expressionless face.

"Blaine!" she cried out.

In a trance of terror, she ran down to the arena wall, calling. The stupodes plodded on, single file, oblivious to their surroundings. The line filled half a circumference of the arena. Marcella moved with it, her eyes intent upon one form. She found her way out onto the broad floor, moved by fits and starts, cried out, though her words would not carry against the thumping band music.

The elderly man came after her, tried to call her back. Sections of the vast audience came to their feet, struck by this unaccountable drama. Throughout the auditorium people pointed, whispered, craned to see. The confusion grew stronger, the band music faded. Curiosity spread over the thousands like an electric wind. The band director, waving furiously to keep the music going, turned and saw what the others

saw. His hand froze, poised in mid-air. The music broke off.

All eyes were upon the girl, her extended arms and fingers that seemed to implore as she followed after the certain stupode. The amazed spectators could not mistake the meaning; it was the terrified recognition of a loved one turned stupode!

Over the soft tread of feet, over echoed whispers, the girl's cry sounded.

"Blaine! Blaine! It's me, Blaine—it's your wife! Look at me! Tell me you know me, Blaine! Blaine, what have they done—?"

The confusion grew to drown the girl's voice as excited people rose from their seats in sympathetic alarm. Then came a wave of perfect silence, as if the very auditorium missed a heartbeat, held its breath. The girl caught the arm of the handsome, pitiful creature. He hesitated at her touch, turned with expressionless eyes.

Thousands too far away to catch the words listened to the echoes of the pleading voice, were paralyzed by its tragic emotion.

"Blaine! It's me—Marcella! Don't you know me?"

The gap in the marching line widened before them, while back of them the oncoming stupodes gathered closer.

Whispers sifted through the audience. "Look! He seems to recognize—" Hushed whispers. The whispers of hearts throbbing to stark human tragedy, of minds magnetized in mass pity.

In that tense moment the brilliantly uniformed Lieutenant Braba flourished his whip and strode to the break in the parade line. The whip lashed out—whizz—crack!!

Wincing creatures uttered cries, marched on in dumb obedience. But one figure caught by the lash went down with the shock of pain—the figure of the girl. Her stifled cry of pain echoed through the building.

On the instant thousands cried "Boo—boo—boo!!" Dozens of persons near the scene rushed down into the arena toward the prone girl.

Dr. Ravenstein, already trudging as fast as his aging figure would go, was first there. He gathered the fainting form into his arms and bore her off through an arena exit.

It was several minutes before the boos of the audience quieted—not until the flashy Lieutenant conducted his company off the floor. Then the people sat again, dazed, stunned, silently reflective. The show carried on, under the blare of trumpets and the crash of cymbals, but the spirit was gone out of it.

CHAPTER V

Jimmie Returns

THE doctor and several volunteer assistants rushed the agonized girl into a hospital car. The doors

closed. The high-powered vehicle rolled up onto the trafficway. A cooling breeze poured through. The girl's eyes opened a little, her white lips trembled.

The doctor watched intently and administered every care. He was scarcely aware that another person sat in the corner of the ambulance, looking on with deep sympathy. He spoke to the girl in a soft voice, advised her to close her eyes and rest. Cool applications to her face made her breathe more easily.

"Where are we going?" she asked.

"Wherever you wish—home if you like—or the hospital—" he said gently, soothingly.

"Let's just ride awhile," she suggested weakly. "It seems restful and I'm sure it will help a lot."

The doctor smiled at her and conveyed her wish to the driver. As they spun along she tried to relax, but it was not easy. Thoughts tormented her.

"I'm sorry I acted so—so—"

"But you didn't," the doctor said quickly. "Many a mind would have snapped under such a shock.

A lovely girl rose suddenly to her feet, wide eyes fixed in horror on one of the stupodes marching around the arena



You're all right, Marcella."

"No, I lost my grip on myself. Somehow it struck me as more shocking than even death. I still can't realize—" She shuddered and closed her eyes painfully. "I should have guessed—" Her dark eyes filled with tears and her head turned away.

There was a long silence as the venerable man watched over her weeping form. The car rolled on noiselessly. Inwardly Ravenstein blamed himself. Why had he been so ineffectual in the face of this fearsome peril? Why hadn't he foreseen the worst and prepared her with a hint? Instead he had denied that the worst could come. After all of his professional years he was still a victim of that treacherous human weakness—optimism. Bitter thoughts.

Once he glanced toward the semi-dark corner of the ambulance but did not recognize the bronzed face that looked on so silently, and he was too much preoccupied with his own remorse to be curious.

Gradually Marcella's manner changed. The medicine restored her energy. She reached for her handkerchief, brushed away her tear stains, rose up on one elbow, let her eyes rove over the passing scenery. She gave a passing glance to the silent occupant whose face was lost in shadows, turned to Dr. Ravenstein with determination.

"I must get home," she said. "I have an engagement with Karnairre tonight. I'm going to demand my husband."

The doctor smiled, shook his head decisively. "You must rest tonight. Forget everything and rest, for your own good. You can't defy such a shock as this."

"Take me home," Marcella demanded. "I'm going to keep my engagement. Karnairre doesn't know who I am, but he likes me. It's my big chance. I'll win his confidence, then make him give me back Blaine as they took him from me." The girl's eyes lighted with violence. "If he won't do it, I'll—"

Ravenstein put his fingers to her lips to stop her rash speech, then glanced for the second time at the extra passenger, fearful that he had caught the dreadful implication.

The passenger's face also lighted with violent determination. "I'll go with you, Marcella!"

The girl gave a start.

"Jimmie!!!" She and the doctor both shouted it at once. Her arms went up to him, and for the next few minutes the three of them hugged and laughed and cried by turns. It was a welcome wave of gladness in the midst of tragedy. They poured questions to him faster than he could answer, and chided him for sitting so silent and gnome-like all this time.

They learned of his perilous journey over the coastal mountains with Joe the Beggar and Chumpo, his staunch comrades; of his flight from Debenz back to Pravianna, which took his last bill.

"Then I had just enough cash left to call from the airport. That was this noon, and they told me you'd already left for the Stupodes Show, so I ran all the way. When I found out it wasn't free, the best thing

I could do was slip in through the back entrances. I finally made it into a room off the arena—" his thrilling tale ended on a somber note—"where I could see everything."

"Then—you saw?" Marcella asked.

"Yes."

SILENCE fell heavy again.

"How'd they ever get Blaine in a fix like that?" the boy finally asked.

The doctor shuffled uncomfortably; he wished to postpone this talk. But Marcella's nerves were strong and her face showed a new fighting spirit.

"We don't know, Jimmie. We only know he went to Africa to fight this thing—and to find you—"

"He did!!!" The boy was aghast. "I must have got away before he came." A flash came in his mind's eye—the picture of a stranger outside the entrance of the stupodes pen, beating off several guards, leaping over the gate into the swarm of prisoners where the insidious Knockouts lurked with deadly needles. "Yeah, I guess he came all right. I see it now. I wouldn't have got out of it hadn't been for him. . . . So they gave him the rap!" Angry tears came into the boy's eyes. "I know who did it! And I'll go back down there—"

"No, Jimmie," said the doctor sternly. "This is a bigger fight than one man against another. It's a fight of laws and principles. If we ever settle it we'll do it through courts, in a legal manner, not with violence!"

"But Blaine!" the boy cried. "We can't hang back after what's happened to Blaine!"

"If there was anything on earth we could do—" Defiance was in the doctor's tone, but his words crashed against hopeless barriers. Marcella knew what those barriers were—laws that forbid private physicians to lay hands upon stupodes; laws that confiscated vital materials.

"Doctor Ravenstein," she implored, hoping against hope, "if I brought my husband to you as he is now, would you dare try to help him?"

Ravenstein touched the girl's forehead with compassion. "You're feverish, dear. You'd best put these things out of your mind and rest until—"

"But we'd never let anyone know. Blaine and I would go away—to another country—so you'd never get into any trouble. Would you—could you—for Blaine?"

The venerable old man bit his lips with anguish. He could not bring himself to answer that it was more than laws, it was his own failing skill that prevented such an experiment. He turned his head away.

Marcella closed her eyes, knowing she shouldn't have asked. She only seared her tragic wound with more poignant realization. There were limits to the miracles of science.

But her fighting blood flowed hot. She would never leave Blaine to such a fate. Whatever the consequences, better that she administer a merciful death with her own hands.

"I'm going to get Blaine," she said. "I'm going to get him." Her words were brittle diamonds. "This is my battle now. He is my husband. I'll go for him tonight."

If persuasion failed with Karnairre, she would try purchase, or employ whatever strategy seemed best. The doctor shook his head helplessly. Jimmie, however, was seasoned to danger.

"I'll go, too, to be sure nothing happens."

"That's swell of you, Jimmie, but—" she doubted whether Karnairre would tolerate an uninvited guest. But Jimmie insisted he could get away with it. His bronzed face turned into a mischievous grin.

"I've got the very scheme, right here in this bag." He opened a sack and drew forth a handful of black and white checkered collars. "I found these in a room back of the arena. Afraid they might fall into dangerous hands so I picked them up. Thought they might come in handy. I'll wear one tonight and attend the party as your stupode. No questions asked."

CHAPTER VI

Peril on the Roof

BLAINE RISING felt weak. He groped mentally. He tried to explain this strange feeling to himself but the thoughts wouldn't come. He needed words to think with, and the words he wanted were always just out of reach.

He plodded across the pebbly roof under the party lights up close to the sky and tried to remember. Why should he be wearing this purple uniform with the gold sash, carrying this tray of drinks to that farther table?

Because someone told him to. That was his reason.

Now some people called him to bring the drinks this way instead. He changed his course at once. The people laughed. Amusing to them that he obeyed so well. He didn't like for them to laugh. He wished he could hit them, but something told him he mustn't. He must obey. It was easier. There were already stripes on his body from times he was slow to obey.

Sometimes he groped in his mind for ways to disobey or to resist. But the ideas wouldn't come clear. Before he could grasp them, he would somehow go ahead and carry out the order.

Just like now. He didn't especially want to bring the drinks to these laughing people instead of the others, but he did it. They told him to and he did. He wished he had just one master to obey. It would be easier.

"We put one over on you that time, Karnairre," shouted one of the laughers to the big fat man with the beard who sat at the farther table.

"Your stupodes obey too well," another laughter roared.

Blaine smiled a little and blushed. They seemed to be talking about him. It sounded like a compliment, but words went so fast it was hard to tell.

The fat, black-bearded man at the farther table

guffawed. "You're one up on me, Bill, but we'll get the next drinks or I'll make Three-Kay go stick his head down the ventilator." Then the big black bearded man and the others laughed and laughed. All except that certain one. Marcella.

Three-Kay—that was Blaine. There was more to his name. Something like Jay-Three-Kay-Three-Kay. He couldn't remember it all, but it was stamped on his collar. Easier for him when they just called him Three-Kay.

He looked around for the ventilator as he went back to the roof bar for more drinks. But it was hard to remember what a venti—venti—looked like. Then the word escaped him, and there was nothing left except a vague fear that the fat man with the black beard might harm him.

He wished he could hit the big fat man. Maybe he would do it sometime, only the man always shouted something at him and then he felt afraid to hit. Besides, he was so tired. This tiredness didn't seem right somehow. Neither did the fear. Things didn't used to be that way before—

Before what? He couldn't quite think back to *before*. Only a little. It was strongest when he looked at that certain one—Marcella—the pretty one who sat beside the big black-bearded man. Why did she always stare at him with such a frightened look?

He felt warm toward her. There was something about her, and him—he couldn't quite remember.

Maybe she wanted him to say something when she looked at him that way, or maybe not, he couldn't tell which. She seemed so nervous whenever he came near. Once she tipped her drink over. He thought he should go away, but the fat man with the beard called him back for something.

THE party grew louder and more confused. Sometimes Blaine would stop to look at the boy who always favored him with a friendly twinkle. He was Jimmie Br—somebody. Jimmie, at least. It seemed vaguely good that Jimmie should be here, but something about his looks wasn't so good. It was that collar—just like all the waiters wore, including himself.

"Marcella wants to talk with you," Jimmie whispered. "She wants to take you home."

Blaine smiled a little, then went on with his tray.

Jimmie, playing the role of stupode, kept his eyes on Marcella, but she wasn't getting anywhere. He grew restless. Then, as the liquors flowed faster and the roof bar became rushed, good fortune brought him something to relieve the monotony. He overheard the nearby bartenders.

"Henry, if you'd move that robot out of the way, we'd make better time."

"Okay, I'll put him out by the wall. I'd put him to work serving, only you know Karnairre. No robots at his parties. Nothing but stupodes."

"Yeah. Better put him around the corner."

A man-size obelisk of power rolled out of the bartender's door toward Jimmie's corner. The boy was

thrilled. No companion could be more welcome. His fingers itched to touch the controls, which he studied in the dim light. But he held back, remembering that no stupode had the intelligence to operate a robot. The temptation was great, but he clasped his fingers behind him, waited, endured, kept an eye on Marcella.

MARCELLA starved for a chance to talk with Blaine. Every minute was torture for her. She neither drank nor jested, but somehow she led Karnairre on. He loved to boast of his startling career, his stony-heartedness. No use to appeal for Blaine's return. There wasn't an ounce of sympathy in the man's make-up. Blaine, to him, was simply something to command, something to whip when the mood struck him, eventually something to sell. Marcella was desperate.

The others at her table listened as the great executive unfolded his arrogant plans to expand his industry.

"Confidentially," he gloated, "I've got the Confederation eating right out of my hand. In two years I'll flood this country with stupodes." He tilted his beard with gusto.

"Have you talked it over with the Superior Court?" Marcella dared to ask.

The forthcoming Superior Court battle was a thorn in his flesh, but his magniloquent mood dulled the pain.

"Superior—say, Beautiful, I've got those judges packed away right in my pockets!" He suited antics to words. "Here's Grayson in this pocket, and Temporo in this pocket, and—"

"Don't run out of pockets," someone said. "Seven judges you know."

"But it only takes four to say the word. I've got them lined up as regular as the seasons. Never doubt it, the great Karnairre has tricks up his sleeve."

Some skeptic across the table gave the conversation a fearful turn. "What about that fracas at the show this afternoon? Any tricks for that?"

The bearded man scowled. Marcella went faint, closed her eyes, held on breathless. But no one noticed. The heckler pursued the point.

"The papers are full of it. They're takin' the stupode industry for a ride—and just wait till they find the girl! What a story she'll give 'em!"

"They won't find her if I find her first," Karnairre said with a surly laugh. "I'll teach her to mind her manners."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. Whenever women come to me weeping for their menfolks, I threaten to turn them over to the Uplift Board to face the exams themselves. That cools them."

"Who you s'pose that girl was?"

"Hell, I don't know," Karnairre growled. "Who gives a damn?"

"You might if you'd seen it the way it came over television. Didn't look so good for the stupode busi-

ness. In fact, my friend, it looked worse than that."

"Aw, quit gripin'," said the skeptic's girl friend. "I wanna drink an' I wanna dance an' I don't wanna hear no more of your blabbin'."

"Excuse me," said Marcella, and she fled.

"There—see!" said the girl friend. "She's sick of your blabbin' too."

"Let her go," said Karnairre. He rose and went the other way.

MARCELLA'S heart beat madly. She sought the shadows—anywhere to escape.

There was Blaine by the wall. At last, the chance her soul cried for.

"Blaine, dear," she caught him. The lights were dim here. No one would see her smother him in a feverish embrace. "Blaine, dear, I've been dying for you to come back. . . . Talk to me, Blaine. Tell me you're all right."

A little of the girl's hysterical emotion went to him. "I'm kind of . . . all right—"

"What have they done to you? Don't look away, Blaine. Talk to me. Do you remember things—or—"

"I remember you . . . you're Marcella."

"Oh, Blaine!" She buried her sobs against his chest, then shook his shoulders with trembling hands, tried to draw responses from him. His words were brief and simple, his emotions negligible.

"Blaine! Can't you *make* yourself be different? Don't be afraid of the whip! Don't be afraid of anything. Get a grip on yourself, Blaine! Use your *will power*!"

Blaine smiled uncomfortably and murmured, "What do you want me . . . to do?"

Marcella gave way to a torrent of tears. How futile to plead for will power when the glands were too sluggish from drugs to supply any initiative. The stoppage of a fraction of an ounce of life-driving chemicals made all the difference. No magic of mind over matter could make up for it.

And still the suggestion was not entirely lost; Blaine struggled to grasp the situation.

A warning hiss came from Jimmie. Marcella stepped back, her mind whirling dizzily.

"What's going on here?" Karnairre thundered.

"Choosing the company of stupodes in preference to me?" He laughed harshly. "Trying to make me jealous?" He jested, but there was a note of suspicion in his suggestions.

Marcella applied her powder puff and turned to him. "This stupode—er—"

"Not annoying you, was he?" His words cut sharp.

"No—oh, no! I was just—looking him over. I wish to buy him. What's the price?"

Karnairre's look of suspicion relaxed. He expected to raffle off a few stupodes later in the night, but a sale was a sale.

"Come out in the light and we'll see what he looks like."

"I'll buy him here and now," said Marcella. She snatched at her pocketbook, handed him a bill. "I'll arrange to pay the rest later. I must leave at once."

"Hold on here, Beautiful!" Karnairre's appetite turned from the commercial to the romantic as he pocketed the bill. "Not so early in the evening. I've taken a fancy to you—"

With no thought of the checkered collar that hovered near or the younger stupode parked by the wall, he took Marcella's hands. Dim lights, a pretty girl, a moment of seclusion. He tried to embrace her.

A strange thing happened. The stupode she had just bought stepped in and pushed Karnairre away. The huge man gasped in amazement. "What the hell—"

"Mine!" asserted Blaine. A dim sense of possession moved him.

The great Karnairre roared, "Why you damned—!" He whipped out a lash, drew it back to strike. The girl stifled a cry, caught his arm. Then, as if to paralyze him with astonishment, the stupode said, "I want to hit you." A fist shot out.

Physically the blow was staggering enough. But the psychological effect was a cold knockout. Karnairre's universe tottered. The whole stupodes industry trembled to the roots. A jealous stupode!

The shocked man leaped forward. His eyes blazed fire. His whip arm raised. Down came the lash in seven swift cutting strokes across Blaine's body. Up-raised for the eighth—

It did not descend. Steel arms prevented. A robot's automatic grip seized up the huge body of Karnairre, held him aloft, powerless to do more than kick and cry.

"This way!" Jimmie shouted, snatching something from the robot. He and Marcella caught Blaine's hands. They slipped back of the roof bar and gained the exit, hesitated a moment to look back, were frozen momentarily by the sight.

Karnairre's struggle had started the robot coasting. The crowd awoke to his cry, several started after him with terrified screams. The robot accelerated down the gently inclined roof toward the far edge. Feet thudded after it.

But the sprinters' efforts were wasted. When the automatic mechanism came to the danger point its safety devices checked it, suction feet went down to hold it fast. High in its arms the great Karnairre overhung the roof's edge, safe as the famous leaning tower, to glare with bulging eyes at the lighted street hundreds of feet below.

Blaine and his escorts scurried into an elevator.

CHAPTER VII

A Fighting Stupode

THE candid shot which some enterprising cameraman caught of the frightened Karnairre perched over the roof's edge like a wild-eyed gargoyle created

a sensation. Between television and the newspapers, the whole nation saw it. Rare photography. Splendid study in facial expression. The great executive with his picturesque beard was a popular camera subject anyway. To see him thus struggling in the embrace of his arch-competitor, the robot, tickled the public fancy.

Reports varied as to the facts back of the picture. Some accounts insisted that a stupode had set off the mischievous robot. Karnairre's rebuff was that the whole scene was a frameup by his enemies. Many superstitious persons who liked to believe that robots had the power to think and choose, seized on the rumor that this mechanical man intended to murder his sworn enemy.

But aside from the scalding ridicule it brought Karnairre, the incident's chief effect was to remind the public of the deep underlying conflict between two rising industries—robots and stupodes.

A few days later a more serious story broke—the answer to the mystery of the girl involved in the scene at the Stupodes Show the previous week.

The story bombshelled across the continent. The girl was no other than Marcella Kingman, one of the three Americans who had made headlines a few months earlier by their spectacular return to life from a previous century. The public remembered, and read her story avidly.

She told everything, from Jimmie's disappearance to her own purchase of her ill-fated husband and Karnairre's use of the whip. There were pictures to illustrate the latter scene, for Jimmie had caused the robot's infra-red camera to operate during the last few minutes on the roof, and had snatched the film before leaving.

Thus, sound pictures carried the heart-rending drama to the people. Marcella telecast her personal appeal against the stupode evil, for she was sure that public opinion, the ultimate power in any nation, must find an answer. Her appeal rang true. Thousands turned their attention to the stupode smirch for the first time, felt vaguely that they should do something about it.

But one question the interviewers asked most often, Marcella evaded. "What has happened to your husband, Mrs. Rising? Won't you let us see him? The television audience would like for him to say a few words—"

"Please!" Marcella would answer, turning her head away. "He is gone. That is all that I can say."

The Rising incident still lingered in the hearts of the people when the fall session of the Superior Court took the spotlight. At last, a test case. Perhaps the stupodes industry would be found illegal. Perhaps stupodes would be declared human.

THE outer world as well as the Central European Confederation looked on eagerly, grew tense as the hearings began. Was the Superior Court prepared to

strike a death blow to the checkered collar traffic, to leave a clear field for the booming robot industry?

Fortunes were in the balance. Investors and gamblers played a nervous game while they waited for the hand of the Superior Court to point. The frenzied stockholders of the Stupodes Corporation swarmed after Karnairre, demanded to know whether he could save them. He came back at them with ridicule for their fears. He had plenty of trumps up his sleeve.

"Go soak your heads!" he snorted at a stockholders' meeting. "It's in the bag. Four judges line up every time I crack the whip, and I've cracked it. Put your minds at rest."

Karnairre knew. Four of the seven dignitaries came to the daily hearings fully decided in advance.

But the judges were only human. They saw the pendulum of public sympathies swing in the other direction. The Rising affair had thrown the nation's judgment off balance, but it would come back. No need to launch a decision squarely against the tide of popular whimsy. Better delay action. Give the fickle public time to swing back.

One of the judges became conveniently ill and the hearings were postponed.

Tension among Karnairre's employees and stockholders relaxed. Their interest returned to the sales chart.

But no one relaxed in the presence of the great Karnairre. He had the jitters, and neither the court's delay nor the sales chart gave him any comfort. An office boy who dared to ask him if that Rising woman was preying on his mind now went about with his arm in a sling and his lips tight shut.

Since the Rising affair, Karnairre kept an amber colored demijohn of whiskey on his ebony desk. As the sales went down, so did the whiskey. Once the sales jumped to a peak, then plummeted. That was the week after the Rising woman's first releases to the press. Every time the president's eye fell on a sales chart, that sharp peak stuck him like a barb. A thousand or more unexpected sales at a psychological moment that called for a slump. Something rotten there.

All that was weeks ago, but the secret of that abnormal peak had never been propounded. It, like Blaine Rising's disappearance, was slow burning torture within him. He tried to quench it with whiskey.

Now he sat, one hand on the demijohn, eyes on the chart, waiting for his staff to come into meeting. His secretaries and department heads seated themselves around the table, prepared for his blast of wrath.

He began by tongue-lashing the sales staff. In all these weeks they had never traced that abnormal week of sales. Bona fide customers buying for bona fide friends. That was all they had ever found out.

NEXT he turned on Smitt because the secret service bureau had never located Blaine Rising. A fighting stupode running around loose. Swell advertisement for the business!

"I've got agents on the lookout," Smitt defended.

"Three men keeping watch on Ravenstein's home. His wife's there. She'll lead us to him sooner or later."

"I think he's dead," someone spoke up. "The newspapers rumored a mercy killing shortly after she bought him, and the way she's keeping mum—"

"Don't be fooled by her!" Karnairre snapped. "If there's an underground movement, she's in on it. She's clever as the devil."

"You ought to know," cracked Judson under his breath.

"Shut up!" Karnairre snarled. His dictatorial grip had slipped since the roof party.

"What's the dope on this underground movement?" asked Lemska. "More newspaper talk?"

"That's what I'm getting at," Karnairre blustered. He jerked his thumb toward the sales chart. "That abnormal jump came right on top of the black eye we got out of the Rising affair. I'll venture every one of those thousand stupodes went into the hands of a doctor for treatment."

The big perspiring man paused for a drink. He caught Lemska's skeptical look. "You think I'm jumping at conclusions? It's high time we jumped. That same week Smitt's watchers saw strangers coming and going at Dr. Ravenstein's. Professional looking men. Undoubtedly doctors. A dozen of them in an hour. Finally they waylaid one and what did they find on him? A small bottle of medicine—unlabeled!"

"Containing what?"

"Yeah, *what!* The ninnies let him smash it to the cement sidewalk. That night they raided Ravenstein's secret laboratories and found them cleaned out. Not even a monkey left. So there we are. But that tells the story. Ravenstein was a rebel when the Uplift Act went in. He's been working up hormone cultures all these years to be ready when he got his chance at some stupodes."

The officials stared. So this was why Karnairre was hot under the collar. The industry was over a fire. An illegal fire, to be sure, but too much heat could blow the whole works sky high, laws and all. The Rising incident fell at Ravenstein's doorstep. Ravenstein and his fellow doctors were out for blood.

"Whoever slipped Blaine Rising into the stupode factory in the first place?" Smitt asked.

"Or dozens of others like him?" Lemska added.

Judson jumped to his own defense. "I tried to tell you here in meeting one day, Karnairre, and you wouldn't—"

Slap! Judson slunk backward, his face stinging.

"Let that be the last blurt out of you," Karnairre seethed. His fellows froze. He thrust his black beard at them with his old sense of power and jumped at a decision.

"We'll call in those stupodes to check them over," he growled. "Every registration number that went out that week. That's within our legal rights. It'll give us a chance to derail this underground movement before it gets any momentum."

Lemska was critical. To recall a thousand stupodes would look bad from a sales standpoint. But Karnairre seized on a coming national holiday. "We'll call them in for the Liberation Day parade. Pay their expenses. The public won't suspect a thing."

"And if they don't come—?"

"We'll declare war!" the president roared, red faced. "We'll send gangs out to search them down! You can't hide a thousand stupodes for long! One good clean up and we'll be back on an even keel. The doctors won't have any recourse to law."

The group sat in complacent silence for several minutes. Stupodes stocks would rise today. Things looked up. Whether the thousand stupodes bought for experimental purposes by Ravenstein and his associates were kept in hiding, or whether they were sent forth to the Liberation Day celebration, the underground anti-stupode movement would soon be crushed.

Smitt indiscreetly spoke up to shatter the pretty picture. "But suppose doctors *could* change stupodes into human beings, and they got by with a few." The group glared at Smitt. He followed through. "Would the former stupodes remember things that happened while they *were* stupodes? For instance, would this fighting stupode, Blaine Rising, remember all he saw down in the African laboratories?"

A chill shot through the conference. Karnairre paled, poured himself another drink with unsteady hands.

"Blaine Rising's dead," some one muttered, trying to turn it off.

"I don't know—" Smitt said doubtfully.

"You'd better find out," Karnairre rasped. "Run him down. Fix up some kind of accident that won't look suspicious. I give you one more week—"

The door opened and Smitt's three men dragged themselves in, a disheveled mess. One had a split lip, the other two wore purple swollen eyes.

"Blaine Rising is back," said the spokesman. "He's at Ravenstein's."

"Why didn't you bring him over?" Karnairre flashed.

"Yeah, why didn't we? That damn stupode's a fighter!"

CHAPTER VIII

A Thousand Dangerous Men

MARCELLA looked up into the understanding eyes of her husband. Tears streaked her cheeks. "Don't mind me," she said, laughing and sobbing at the same time. "I'm so happy to have you back. After all you've been through—"

"We won't even think about it." Blaine smiled and held her tightly. "It must have been far worse for you than me."

"You—you remember?"

"Perfectly." He dropped her into the divan and

sat beside her. "I wasn't unconscious. I was just slow, sluggish. I couldn't catch the meanings of things until they were gone—but now everything comes back clear—like reading your own diary." He grinned at Jimmie who stood by beaming. "Even to that fast one you and the robot slipped over on Karnairre. I'm going to buy you a robot of your own for that, Jimmie."

He turned to Ravenstein. The lines of purpose had grown deeper in the kindly old face, but a proud smile glowed.

"Doctor, I wouldn't have believed they could make me over in such a hurry." He tossed his stupode's collar onto the table. "Guess I'm through with that. Your medicine and those swell physicians you turned me over to—"

Ravenstein's warning gesture reminded him to talk lower. In his enthusiasm he had forgotten. The doctor muttered, "We scarcely dare breathe around here any more."

Blaine understood. He knew all about the cooperative scheme of the doctors—to reconstruct a thousand stupodes with Ravenstein's serums. "I hope it isn't too late for me to help with the movement."

"I'm ready for you to take over the leadership," said the doctor. The greatest task was still ahead—the task of humanizing those creatures who had always been under glandular handicaps—who were now in possession of normal capacities for thinking and behaving, for the first time in their lives.

Blaine did not underestimate this task. Marcella and Jimmie agreed with him that, much as they yearned to return to America, they would not plan to go until they had devoted a full year to Ravenstein's ideal. If they could develop the experimental stupodes into normal persons—and somehow convince the public that these creatures were no longer the tail end of the human procession—then, with good luck, they might undermine the stupode curse.

A colossal, unromantic task; but Ravenstein's three guests faced it as they would face a mad dragon. They accepted the challenge, never guessing that the ultimate clash was only two short weeks away.

"It was you and Marcella who started the movement rolling," said the doctor. "Within twenty-four hours after your wife's first public appeal, scores of doctors informed us they were ready to back us to the limit. But we'll have a long fight on our hands. And Karnairre's tactics—"

"Blaine!" Marcella suddenly gasped as she saw his bruised knuckles. "You've—you've been in a fight!"

"Guilty," Blaine laughed. "Some thugs were laying for me as I came in."

"Gollies!" Jimmie blurted, glancing at the window. Outside it was growing dark.

"They think I'm still a stupode," Blaine chuckled. "Of course, legally I am."

His chuckle went cold as he felt a pang of fear fall upon the group. It suddenly came home to them

that he had cleared only one hurdle. Others waited—insidious unseen dangers—legal traps—lawless thugs.

The doctor bit his lips. "You're on a spot, Blaine. There's nothing they fear more than a fighting stupode. And what Karnairre fears, he stamps out."

A grimmer thought came to Blaine. "By this time, legally speaking, there are a thousand fighting stupodes. A thousand that have suddenly come into possession of all their natural human impulses—and most of them have never had any training in applying the brakes! A thousand brand new, full grown humans. Until we get them tamed, they'll be the most dangerous men in the world! We've got to keep them under cover until they've had a year to get used to themselves—or the whole thing will crash!"

Cold silence. Then something battered at the rear of the house.

THEY found a wounded, gasping stranger slumped against the back door. Blaine carried his bloody form to a bed. Ravenstein applied first aid to the bullet wounds while the stranger talked against swiftly ebbing time.

Smitt's men had recognized him and plugged him, he said; left him in the alley to die, drove off in a car. They wouldn't know he got through to Ravenstein.

"But I had to tell you what they're planning," he moaned. "Maybe I'm a traitor, but Karnairre never gave me a chance to talk. I took enough off him. I'm on his staff. Name's Judson."

The little group stood rigid above him as he poured forth the enemy's plans—an accidental death for Blaine—a surprise call for the thousand stupodes shortly before Liberation Day.

When the ambulance came for the dying man, Blaine, Jimmie, and the doctor's robot also went. Their chance to slip out quickly and safely. No time to waste now. A thousand men would soon be put to the test. A year's training must be compressed into two weeks. Ravenstein shook his head dubiously as the ambulance slid off into the darkness.

Jimmie was good protection against any framed up accident. His sharp eyes caught every shadow of suspicion.

Within half an hour Blaine, Jimmie, and robot were out of the danger zone. The lights of Pravianna receded as their private plane sped them on their way. Their thousand men were scattered all over the Central European Confederation. To make the rounds would require more than a hundred stops. Blaine planned his minutes. He would go day and night, sleep between stops. His special pilot was as dependable as a robot. Every doctor would be ready with his stupodes. Marcella would prepare them for his coming, by telephone.

Blaine stood before a cluster of ten stupodes, gathered in a doctor's home. He saw the eager curiosity in their faces. They were still in their first blush of reexploring life through new eyes of understanding.

For thirty minutes he rolled out his swift advice to them. The fate of all stupodes depended upon them. They must prepare for Liberation Day. They must be models of self-discipline. They must not let Karnairre's men know they were treated by physicians. For that one day they must pretend to be dumbly obedient. Even if some one cracks the whip at them. They must stick together, behave with restraint, keep their stupode collars on. BUT—if anyone should line them up for medication or blood tests or try to close them into a room, they must REBEL—ESCAPE—come back to their doctors!

Blaine patted them on the shoulders, shook their hands. He would try to get back again before they were called to Pravianna. There was too much to say for the brief time, and it needed to be said over and over. However, a phonograph record would help. The robot having recorded the entire scene, Jimmie handed the record over to the doctor.

From that hour, the stupodes' days and nights were crowded with rapid fire education—doctors' lectures—Blaine's recorded advice—discussions—practice in restrained manners. Even as the stupodes slept, their earphones leading from a continuously repeating phonograph, kept up the constant bombardment of admonitions and warnings, planting them deeply in the subconscious minds.*

He saw the reconstructed children for what they were—children in the bodies of adults. Two weeks of training would scarcely touch them. It would take years of living. But he went on trying.

They smiled up at him, studied his manner curiously, but were diverted by trifles. They were still in the stage of elemental wants. They quarrelled over clothing, grabbed for candy, rushed to the windows as females passed by on the streets. For the first time in their lives they thrilled with boldness.

The constant talk about conducting themselves in such a way that other stupodes would be freed fell on shallow ground. They wanted to eat, and wear, and possess, make things with their hands, operate the robot, contest with each other and bluff each other.

But Blaine stayed by his guns, and his words shot through them. The robot reeled off the sound film of Blaine's physical combat with Karnairre on the roof. As Blaine's fist struck out they roared with delight, but when the big man's whip went into action, they sobered. Old memories stirred. They began to understand.

CHAPTER IX

Liberation Day

"LADIES and gentlemen of the television audience, it's Liberation Day!" the announcer boomed. "A hundred and twenty years since the overthrow of the dictators—and what a day! All Pravianna

* This method was used for wireless operators during the World War to speed up their learning of new codes.—Author.

dressed up to celebrate! People already gathering in the stadium, bands marching on Grand Parade Street, colors flying! There'll be many a flashy uniform and spectacular float on old Grand Parade Street today! We see a company of infantry going by at the moment. Farther up the street, war machines. Beyond them we get a glimpse of a shining regiment of robots, all operated by a single control . . .

"Now let's look at these flashy purple and gold uniforms gathering on the edge of Parade Park. Checkered collars, and the banner tells us these fine looking stupodes are from the 3-K series . . ."

Marcella stood close to the television, searched the face of every checkered collar she could see. Blaine must be there. He and Jimmie and the inevitable robot had left in a taxi two hours before.

Dr. Ravenstein answered the telephone. It was Jimmie. The taxi had been struck by another car. Miraculously they had escaped injury. They would hurry on to the park, though they were sure they would be followed.

Ravenstein slumped into a chair, withheld the news from Marcella. She was already worried sick.

The doctor tried to tell himself that Blaine would somehow live through this day. It had been impossible to hold him back. Or Jimmie either. For two weeks they had fought like demons to put this day across—perhaps only to be slain by paid murderers. The minutes dragged.

The television announcer suddenly struck a jarring note. "One moment, ladies and—It's an accident! An accident down this side street. I couldn't catch it for you, it happened so quickly. There you see—where the crowd's gathering. The sign that hung out over the street suddenly ripped loose and fell. We'll be close enough in a minute to see.

"Two victims—a boy of perhaps fifteen and—a robot. So much talk and jangle, but you can see how it fell. They say the rhythm of marchers may have jarred it loose from its moorings . . . It sounds incredible . . .

"A stupode was under that fall, too. He's the one you see administering first aid. I'll try to give you a glimpse of his face—no, I can't get him—but there's an item for Mr. Karnairre—a stupode administering first aid . . .

"The boy is breathing. His eyes are half open. They say he saw the object falling in time to throw the robot's arms up, otherwise they'd have both been crushed . . . Here's our ambulance . . . Gritty chap. He whispered something to the stupode as he was loaded in. Now we'll try to get a glimpse— No, we're too late. The checkered collar bolted right through the crowd . . . He's lost in the swarm of stupodes.

"But watch the crowd go for the crushed robot—picking it to pieces for souvenirs. Well, that's that. A bad start for somebody's big day. Let's cruise around this mob of stupodes and try to find Mr. Karnairre for a few words . . . No, they tell us the

famous stupodes king is busy with an important conference this morning . . ."

PRESIDENT KARNAIRRE perspired as two judges of the Superior Court faced him in his sanctuary. A great honor, but the pressure was oppressive, with a thousand unpredictable stupodes on his mind.

The judges were obviously worried. They must finish the stupodes case. The public clamored for a decision. But a vast fraction of public sentiment was still out of line. Would it ever turn back?

"Yes!" Karnairre thundered. "The instant you pour out your decision they'll lap it up!"

They hoped so, but they clung to doubts. A safe judgment was paramount. They had themselves to consider.

Gradually Karnairre brought them around to face the practical as well as the legal considerations. Stupendous investments made the checkered collar industry a cornerstone of prosperity. They weighed factors carefully, pondered long upon the glories of the Uplift regime, and eventually bent back into line. They shook hands with Karnairre and took their leave.

As soon as their honors were halfway down the corridor that insulated his private office from his battery of secretaries, Karnairre snatched up the telephone to start the judges' reassurance filtering down to the stockholders.

Judge Tempero discovered he had forgotten his pencil, started back. He stopped before the closed door to hear Karnairre's voice thunder, "I've got the saps eating out of my hand!"

Tempero made it a rule never to break dignity, but his legal mind reasoned that one may eavesdrop with perfect dignity. Judge Grayson, following him back, concurred in this opinion. As they listened, they were shocked by profuse references to their pedigrees. They faced each other with a new understanding of themselves.

They heard some one come in from another door, whom Karnairre received as a kindred spirit.

"Well, Braba, you've looked over the J-3's. Think the doctors have done them any damage?"

"I can't see it in their actions. They're surprisingly quiet and orderly, even for stupodes. We'll have to give them physical examinations before we can tell—"

"No time for that now. Test them with a whip. If they show the slightest signs of fighting back, lock them up and we'll give them an operation that no doctor in the world can undo."

"And if they don't fight back?"

"Then you'll know they're still stupodes untouched. I can't believe they are, but I might be wrong. Watch them close. If they're really okay, we may as well parade them for the advertising. Send them once around Grand Parade Street at three o'clock. I'll be on hand to announce them as they circle through

the stadium. Everything will work out okay."

Braba went out the way he had come. Karnairre poured himself a drink and pondered over the ease with which he had ironed things out. Plenty sweet, the way those J-3's had gathered in at Pravianna on short notice. If the owners had any illegal business up their sleeves, they still had a healthy fear of the stupode king's legal rights.

Judges Tempero and Grayson forgot the missing pencil, tip-toed their way out of the building with light-footed dignity, and taxied off.

STRONG hearted though Marcella was, paralyzing fear bore down upon her. The fates were closing in swiftly. Jimmie's nerve shattering ordeal—hidden treacheries that waited for Blaine—it was almost too much to endure.

The doctor shared her terrors. Blaine's plight was doubly perilous. If he should be singled out of the swarm of stupodes, caught whispering directions to them, he would lose his freedom, they, their cause.

When Jimmie's broken wrists were set and bandaged and the ugly gash over his shoulder stitched, the heroic lad slipped off into a deep sleep.

Marcella returned to the televisior, burned her eyes to catch everything that passed. Ravenstein saw her lips tremble, begged her to come away, but she wouldn't. She flinched as she saw Braba wield the whip. She knew every stroke was a spark glancing off dynamite. One by one the ex-stupodes passed the test, took the cutting blows like the simple stupodes they used to be.

The waiting line shuffled along. Blaine came into the picture. She quivered. She felt the rage that tore within him at the very sight of Lieutenant Braba. He often spoke of Braba—the stupodes show—the lash that made her cry out. Next to Karnairre it was Braba who most aroused that fearfully dangerous something buried deeply within him.

A fainting chill swept through her. Two left ahead of Blaine. Would he take it without striking back? She thought not. He would leap like a madman, wreak his vengeance on the spot. And yet, she realized, one break would release a thousand undisciplined creatures upon the despised authorities. Then—a riot of blood—and a lost cause.

Blaine was next. She could see his eyes narrow at Braba.

The television announcer turned back to the street to divert his audience with more pleasant scenes. Blaine and the stupodes were gone. Marcella closed her eyes.

Late that afternoon the checkered collars came back to the television audience as they marched into view at the stadium. The telecaster flashed about from one parading group to another. Then as the full body of purple and gold uniforms moved onto the circular track, the announcer turned the microphone over to Karnairre, who had something to say about the 2090 model stupodes as a manifestation of national progress.

The stadium crowd immediately grew attentive, not to Karnairre's words, but to the strange behavior of the marching stupodes the instant his voice began to boom through the speakers.

Every ex-stupode recognized that voice. Some of them began to mumble and point. That was the same black bearded fat man who had lashed Blaine in the talking movie. Blaine was their friend. They resented that lashing.

Yes, that was the very man, standing on the little platform near their path like a puffing boiler. Now only a few yards away. No one near him but the television man and a few photographers. "I could smack him!" some one muttered. An officer's whip cracked without effect.

It was too tempting. Blaine's whispered orders, "Keep marching! Look straight ahead!" continued to grapevine through the ranks. Still, the marchers edged toward Karnairre magnetically.

"Keep marching!" Blaine cried out. His frantic words carried to the microphones. Earnest words, but they were lost against Karnairre's irritating bluster. A thousand stupodes hated that voice.

Moreover, a thousand resistances had run low. Being lashed, keeping quiet, parading, looking straight ahead, passing stands where the smell of popcorn teased them, holding in like model stupodes for hours—it was all too much. Children that they were, they demanded action. The brakes wouldn't hold any longer.

A tall ungainly creature called Big John led off by shouting, "That's the guy I want to meet, and push his face in."

"Me, too!" "Yeah, he needs it!" "Let's smear him up!"

"No! NO! NO!!!" Blaine shouted, but his voice was lost.

A rush of purple and gold uniforms, checkered collars. Whips flashed. The officers couldn't strike fast enough to turn the stampede.

KARNAIRRE saw what was coming. His hand flew up in amazement. He was never without his own whip. He knew how to use it and when. Without an instant's debate he knew this wasn't one of the proper times. Had he carried a gun, he might have faced the onslaught; but commanders of stupodes were never supposed to need guns.

He leaped heavily from the platform, tried to make an open field run for safety. Big John tackled him and he went down. In a split second a dozen ex-stupodes pounced on him. Five seconds more and he was at the bottom of the biggest dog pile ever released to the world through television.

The photographers sprang nimbly to make the most of the scene and still play safe. The whole thousand of uninformed creatures pressed toward the center of action. Armed police ran across the field to fight their way into the swarm.

In the seething heaped-up center, whips could be

seen lashing at the writhing mass of arms and legs. The vast crowds of the stadium watching from their tiptoes were too startled to shout. Had the checkered collars been seized by a mania? The whips did no good. Cries of wild, childish delight came from the focal center. More stupodes leaped onto the heap as fast as others crawled off.

It was a stupode—Blaine Rising—whose commands eventually made the aggressors unpile. Karnaire reappeared, more dead than alive, more undressed than dressed. His hair and beard were caked with soil. The pressing thousand forced back to make a small open circle about him. He wobbled to his feet, looked around like a bull out of an avalanche.

Utterly deflated as he was, his wits hadn't been crushed out. He blubbered for a microphone. The television announcer plowed through to him.

"This is Karnaire telling you what happened!" his choked voice came through the speakers. An amused roar came back at him from the stadium.

"Meddlers did this!" he rasped. "This gang of wild, crack-brained jass-acks used to be decent stupodes until they fell into the hands of meddling doctors who tried to turn them into human beings. It can't be done! This proves once and for all—"

Blaine flung the huge man back from the mike, shouted, "It proves nothing! They've just started. Give them time! They'll be as human as the rest of us!"

Karnaire plunged at Blaine. The shadow of their clash fell upon the television receiver. With a steel arm Blaine held the blustering mountain of flesh at arm's length. How he craved to swing a fist at that arrogant jaw!—but he couldn't. A thousand eager ex-stupodes watched. He was their model, and his every act cut a deep pattern in their plastic minds.

Shots of warning sounded from the edge of the mob. Terror spread through the stadium as armed police broke a path toward the center. If those irresponsible creatures should plunge for the guns—

And they did! Shrieking with delight, they went for the armed men as if it were a game.

A GUN flew through the air, fell into the open center before the television receiver, lay there on the ground. It was anyone's—but to the utter amazement of every spectator, no stupode leaped for it.

"Never touch a gun!" Blaine shouted. A hundred hilarious voices echoed the slogan. "Never touch a gun!" The words had been planted through the endless repetition of a phonograph record.

Another firearm came whirling through the air to land within the widening arena walled by purple and

gold uniforms. Other revolvers followed. The audience went terrified. A blaze of wild bullets was almost sure to follow.

But instead, the cry of "Never touch a gun!" rose in volume, and suddenly a thousand voices got off on a rollicking sing-song chant.

"Never . . . Never . . . Never touch a gun!

"Never let ourselves get into trouble!

"Never strike an officer. Never hit and run!

"Never fight or quarrel among each other! . . ."

It was a weird turn, from violent action to a song of restraint.

The crowd listened dumbfounded. The television audience saw in Blaine's countenance a curious smile. They saw the bewildered Karnaire standing in the center of this strange ritual, unconsciously holding his clothes together with one hand, picking the mud out of his beard with the other. Officers looked on helpless, as if to say, how can you deal with men that stop in the middle of a fight to speak a piece?

To the chanters this was a lark. They went straight through the phonograph record without a break. With the closing lines they felt the urge to illustrate words with actions:

"We want liberation! We want human rights!

"We want liberation! We want human rights!

"When we master every rule that governs the human race

"We'll throw our checkered collars back—in KAR—NAIRE'S FACE!"

They unlocked their collars and whammed away. Karnaire bunched to the ground, wrapped his arms over his head. Officers dashed through the checkered snowstorm to protect him.

Wild with exhilaration, the stupodes began to run around in circles. A big voice from the loud speakers brought them to attention.

"Special bulletin! The Superior Court brings us a Liberation Day surprise by rendering a decision in the stupodes case. In a five-to-two vote, the judges declare several sections of the Uplift Act null and void. In substance, they declare that stupodes are legally human, and their manufacture and sale is illegal."

Dr. Ravenstein's face, glowing with happiness and pride, was the last sight Blaine and Marcella remembered seeing as they zoomed off in an air liner for America. His words of deep gratitude clung in their minds.

They were a part of the new world now, by every right, and great happiness was theirs.

Across the aisle Jimmie groaned. His happiness would come a week hence, when the bandages came off his hands. Until then he would have to exist in patient agony, unable to touch the brand new 2090 model robot that stood beside him.





ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1933, THE LONDON NEWSPAPER, SUNDAY REFERENCE, REPORTED THAT HERR OTTO FISCHER HAD BEEN SHOT SIX MILES INTO THE AIR IN A 24-FOOT ROCKET AND RETURNED SAFELY TO EARTH.

HE MADE THE TRIP IN A ROCKET DESIGNED BY HIS BROTHER, HERR BRUNO FISCHER, WHO WAS KILLED A YEAR PREVIOUS TO THE SUCCESSFUL FLIGHT IN A DISASTROUS FIRST ATTEMPT.

THE FLIGHT WAS MADE FROM THE ISLAND OF RÜGEN IN THE BALTIC SEA.

THE FLIGHT TOOK PLACE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE GERMAN WAR MINISTRY. THE ROCKET ASCENDED TO A HEIGHT OF 6 MILES AND DESCENDED TO EARTH ON A PARACHUTE. A TOTAL OF 10 MINUTES AND 26 SECONDS ELAPSED BETWEEN TAKE-OFF AND LANDING. THAT WAS THE REFEREE'S STORY AND SO IT TURNED OUT TO BE—JUST A STORY.

By WILLY LEY

The Fischer Hoax is one of the more recent and perhaps the most sensational of scientific hoaxes, not because it caused any great furore, but because it was accepted so matter-of-factly by the general public as an actual fact beyond reproach.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOE SEWELL

HOAXES and large meteorites behave in a somewhat similar manner, they occur when least expected and usually strike in places where they are hard to expose.

No actual problem in rocket research or, for that matter, in any other science has ever made me work as hard as the Fischer Hoax. And hardly ever did work seem as futile as in that particular case because there were so very many people that fervently wished for one reason or another that it might be true.

Here's the story:

On November 5th, 1933, the London newspaper "Sunday Referee" printed on its front page an "exclusive" report of an amazing secret rocket flight performed a week previous from the island of Rügen in the Baltic. As far as I have been able to ascertain (and, as I said, I did work on the case) the Fischer Hoax started with that article which, therefore, deserves to be quoted in part:

"A sensational secret demonstration of the practicability of the rocket principle," the report read, "applied to flight was made here last Sunday, when Herr Otto Fischer was shot 6 miles into the air within a 24 ft. steel rocket and returned to Earth safe and sound, though shaken."

"The pilot who risked his life in this experiment is a brother of the designer and constructor of the rocket, Herr Bruno Fischer. Owing to the disastrous result of a similar experiment made on Rügen in the spring of last year, when the original inventor was killed, the demonstration was made under the cover of absolute secrecy, under the auspices of the Reichswehr, the German War Ministry. The inhabitants of the island knew nothing of the proposed experiment and no members of the Press were called in to witness it."

"On Sunday morning at 6 o'clock, Otto Fischer shook hands with his brother and the small group of Reichswehr officials present to witness the experiment and crawled through the small steel door . . . There was a blinding flash and a deafening explosion and the slim torpedo-shaped body was gone from the steel framework in which it had rested. A few minutes later it came into sight again, floating nose upwards from a large parachute that had automatically been released when it had begun to descend. . . . A few seconds later it came to rest on the sands a few yards away and Fischer crawled through the door of the rocket, white and shaken, but smiling triumphantly. The journey through space had lasted 10 minutes and 26 seconds."

"It was a tremendous sensation," he said . . . "I lost consciousness for a moment, due to the tremendous acceleration which drained the blood from my head. When I came to my senses and looked at the altimeter before my face it flickered at 32,000 ft.—a fraction over six miles—and then began to drop rapidly. I had completed my climb and was descending . . . The next thing that occupied my attention was the tremendous heat of the asbestos floor on which I was standing. The reason was that the rocket had merely been propelled about two hundred feet by the initial explosion and had been driven the remainder of the distance by the rockets . . . It was, which had been released automatically at timed intervals."

The article was signed by: "Special Correspondent, Rügen."

Needless to say that the other London newspapers, much larger in circulation than the "Sunday Referee" and doubtlessly equipped with a much better organization for gathering and verifying news at once inquired about the truth of the story. Their correspondent failed to corroborate the story and the editors let it go at that. If they had printed only short reports that their regular correspondents had failed to verify the "scoop" of the Sunday Referee everything would have been over. Unfortunately they did not and thus the Fischer Hoax acquired a lining; but long life, some sort of suspended animation from which it aroused itself every once in a while.

Several French and Swiss newspapers, those of the more sensational kind, reprinted it with or without more or less (mostly less) intelligent comments. From France the story found its way into Italian newspapers, from Switzerland into German newspapers. And the original English version was reprinted in the United States and was finally used to fill a page (as a reprint from Boston newspaper) in Hugo Gernsback's old "Wonder Stories," March issue 1934.

The trouble was, as I said, that there were very many people who wished it to be true. In fact the majority of rocket enthusiasts all over the world and all of the would-be experimenters. They all knew that at that time a great number of rocket experiments had already been performed on the proving grounds of the German Rocket Society. It was also known that the American Rocket Society had just started actual experimentation and that Dr. Robert H. Goddard was working on the same problem. But all these rockets had been small models, weighing, say 50 or 60 pounds at most. Now there came the news that an actual passenger carrying rocket existed and had made a successful six-mile flight. That the whole thing had been treated as a secret and that the plans of this rocket were not available seemed relatively unimportant. If one experimenter had done it others could do it too, important was the proof that it could be done.

Thus attempts to discredit the story were not always and not everywhere successful. It was too much like the wanton destruction of a beloved dream.

All those, however, who had more than a superficial knowledge of rocket research and especially those that had done some experimental work themselves were not quite so certain that the report was true. There were a number of discrepancies in the report itself, more or less severe mistakes in the technical description which made those acquainted with experimental work very suspicious.

The next step was an exchange of scale. Most of those with growing doubts inquired at headquarters of the German Rocket Society. As a matter of fact I had not learned that that story made the round through the world press until I received those letters. Naturally I had to make a few inquiries myself before I could answer.

The engineers in charge of the proving grounds of the German Rocket Society were considerably puzzled. They had just been mak-

(Continued on page 75)

Pan-tas-tic



WE MADE THE TRIP IN A ROCKET DESIGNED BY HIS BROTHER, HERR BRUNO FISCHER, WHO WAS KILLED A YEAR PREVIOUS TO THE SUCCESSFUL FLIGHT IN A DISASTROUS FIRST ATTEMPT,



THE FLIGHT WAS MADE FROM THE ISLAND OF RÜGEN IN THE BALTIC SEA.



THE ROCKET CAME TO EARTH WITHIN A FEW YARDS OF ITS DEPARTURE POINT, AND IT WAS A TRIUMPHANT AND HAPPY OTTO FISCHER WHO EMERGED SAFELY, THOUGH SHAKEN . .

ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1933, THE LONDON NEWSPAPER, SUNDAY REFEREE, REPORTED THAT HERR OTTO FISCHER HAD BEEN SHOT SIX MILES INTO THE AIR IN A 24-FOOT ROCKET AND RETURNED SAFELY TO EARTH.



JOE SEWELL

THE FLIGHT TOOK PLACE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE GERMAN WAR MINISTRY. THE ROCKET ASCENDED TO A HEIGHT OF 6 MILES AND DESCENDED TO EARTH ON A PARASCHUTE. A TOTAL OF 10 MINUTES AND 26 SECONDS ELAPSED BETWEEN TAKE-OFF AND LANDING. THAT WAS THE REFEREE'S STORY AND SO IT TURNED OUT TO BE - JUST A STORY.

hoaxes

By WILLY LEY

The Fischer Hoax is one of the more recent and perhaps the most sensational of scientific hoaxes, not because it caused any great furore, but because it was accepted so matter-of-factly by the general public as an actual fact beyond reproach.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOE SEWELL

HOAXES and large meteorites behave in a somewhat similar manner, they occur when least expected and usually strike in places where they are hard to expose.

No actual problem in rocket research or, for that matter, in any other science has ever made me work as hard as the Fischer Hoax. And hardly ever did work seem as futile as in that particular case because there were so very many people that fervently wished for one reason or another that it might be true.

Here's the story:

On November 5th, 1933, the London newspaper "Sunday Referee" printed on its front page an "exclusive" report of an amazing secret rocket flight performed a week previous from the island of Rügen in the Baltic. As far as I have been able to ascertain (and, as I said, *I did* work on the case) the Fischer Hoax started with that article which, therefore, deserves to be quoted in part:

"A sensational secret demonstration of the practicability of the rocket principle," the report read, "applied to flight was made here last Sunday, when Herr Otto Fischer was shot 6 miles into the air within a 24 ft. steel rocket and returned to Earth safe and sound, though shaken."

"The pilot who risked his life in this experiment is a brother of the designer and constructor of the rocket, Herr Bruno Fischer. Owing to the disastrous result of a similar experiment made on Rügen in the spring of last year, when the original inventor was killed, the demonstration was made under the cover of absolute secrecy, under the auspices of the Reichswehr, the German War Ministry. The inhabitants of the island knew nothing of the proposed experiment and no members of the Press were called in to witness it . . ."

"On Sunday morning at 6 o'clock, Otto Fischer shook hands with his brother and the small group of Reichswehr officials present to witness the experiment and crawled through the small steel door . . . There was a blinding flash and a deafening explosion and the slim torpedo-shaped body was gone from the steel framework in which it had rested. A few minutes later it came into sight again, floating nose upwards from a large parachute that had automatically been released when it had begun to descend . . . A few seconds later it came to rest on the sands a few yards away and Fischer crawled through the door of the rocket, white and shaken, but smiling triumphantly. The journey through space had lasted 10 minutes and 26 seconds."

"It was a tremendous sensation," he said . . . 'I lost consciousness for a moment, due to the tremendous acceleration which drained the blood from my head. When I came to my senses and looked at the altimeter before my face it flickered at 32,000 ft.—a fraction over six miles—and then began to drop rapidly. I had completed my climb and was descending . . . The next thing that occupied my attention was the tremendous heat of the asbestos floor on which I was standing. The reason was that the rocket had merely been propelled about two hundred feet by the initial explosion and had been driven the remainder of the distance by the rockets in its tail, which had been released automatically at timed intervals.' . . ."

The article was signed by: "Special Correspondent, Rügen."

Needless to say that the other London newspapers, much larger in circulation than the "Sunday Referee" and doubtlessly equipped with a much better organization for gathering and verifying news at once inquired about the truth of the story. Their correspondent failed to corroborate the story and the editors let it go at that. If they had printed only short reports that their regular correspondents had failed to verify the "scoop" of the Sunday Referee everything would have been over. Unfortunately they did not and thus the Fischer Hoax acquired a lingering but long life, some sort of suspended animation from which it aroused itself every once in a while.

Several French and Swiss newspapers, those of the more sensational kind, reprinted it with or without more or less (mostly less) intelligent comments. From France the story found its way into Italian newspapers, from Switzerland into German newspapers. And the original English version was reprinted in the United States and was finally used to fill a page (as a reprint from a Boston newspaper) in Hugo Gernsback's old "Wonder Stories," March issue 1934.

The trouble was, as I said, that there were very many people who wished it to be true, in fact the majority of rocket enthusiasts all over the world and all of the would-be experimenters. They all knew that at that time a great number of rocket experiments had already been performed on the proving grounds of the German Rocket Society. It was also known that the American Rocket Society had just started actual experimentation and that Dr. Robert H. Goddard was working on the same problem. But all these rockets had been small models, weighing, say 50 or 60 pounds at most. Now there came the news that an actual passenger carrying rocket existed and had made a successful six-mile flight. That the whole thing had been treated as a secret and that the plans of this rocket were not available seemed relatively unimportant. If one experimenter had done it others could do it too, important was the proof that it could be done.

Thus attempts to discredit the story were not always and not everywhere accepted with gratitude, it was too much like the wanton destruction of a beloved dream.

All those, however, who had more than a superficial knowledge of rocket research and especially those that had done some experimental work themselves were not quite so certain that the report was true. There were a number of discrepancies in the report itself, more or less severe mistakes in the technical description which made those acquainted with experimental work very suspicious.

The next step was an exchange of letters on a large scale. Most of those with growing doubts inquired at headquarters of the German Rocket Society. As a matter of fact I had not learned that that story made the round through the world press until I received those letters. Naturally I had to make a few inquiries myself before I could answer.

The engineers in charge of the proving grounds of the German Rocket Society were considerably peeved. They had just been mak-

(Continued on page 75)

DEATH OVER



There in the sky over Chicago's Loop hung a weird glowing thing, and through the city streets poured a horde of metal-clad figures, looting, pillaging, killing. Who were these strange invaders?

CHICAGO



As I whirled and leaped straight toward our guard, Ann's scream sounded behind me

THE instant I entered the room in answer to the buzzer, I saw the big boss was worried. But he didn't talk about it. He got down to the point, ordering brusquely,

"You go see Peabody."

Yes, he was worried about something. He had been under a growing tension for days and his mask of affected benevolence was beginning to wear thin in spots. Not that he wore the mask to fool me. I knew what he was. But he had practiced looking benevolent for so long it had become a habit. Only now his mask was wearing thin and the grasping wolf of the financial world was showing through.

"Okay," I answered. "But why am I to see Peabody? There are a lot of things I am in the dark about, so far as he is concerned."

"Find out why he has been so slow in completing the details of his last invention. Tell him that I want

**BY
ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS**

to forward the drawings to the patent office tomorrow at the latest." He grinned wolfishly.

"So Peabody has another invention," I snapped. "And you're planning to grab the gravy from it. Why don't you give him a break once? Just because he's a damned fool and doesn't know the value of the things he creates doesn't mean that you should take advantage of him all the time. Doesn't your conscience ever hurt you?"

I hadn't meant to defy him. I knew better. But his wolfish grin got under my skin.

The grin vanished. His face changed, became hard and cold. His washed out gray eyes—the eyes of a killer—stabbed at me with daggers of living cold. But

DEATH OVER



There in the sky over Chicago's Loop hung a weird glowing thing, and through the city streets poured a horde of metal-clad figures, looting, pillaging, killing. Who were these strange invaders?

CHICAGO



As I whirled and leaped straight toward our guard, Ann's scream sounded behind me

THE instant I entered the room in answer to the buzzer, I saw the big boss was worried. But he didn't talk about it. He got down to the point, ordering brusquely,

"You go see Peabody."

Yes, he was worried about something. He had been under a growing tension for days and his mask of affected benevolence was beginning to wear thin in spots. Not that he wore the mask to fool me. I knew what he was. But he had practiced looking benevolent for so long it had become a habit. Only now his mask was wearing thin and the grasping wolf of the financial world was showing through.

"Okay," I answered. "But why am I to see Peabody? There are a lot of things I am in the dark about, so far as he is concerned."

"Find out why he has been so slow in completing the details of his last invention. Tell him that I want

**BY
ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS**

to forward the drawings to the patent office tomorrow at the latest." He grinned wolfishly.

"So Peabody has another invention," I snapped. "And you're planning to grab the gravy from it. Why don't you give him a break once? Just because he's a damned fool and doesn't know the value of the things he creates doesn't mean that you should take advantage of him all the time. Doesn't your conscience ever hurt you?"

I hadn't meant to defy him. I knew better. But his wolfish grin got under my skin.

The grin vanished. His face changed, became hard and cold. His washed out gray eyes—the eyes of a killer—stabbed at me with daggers of living cold. But

when he spoke there was no anger in his voice.

"In the first place, if I didn't take advantage of Peabody somebody else would. I might as well have what you term the gravy as somebody else. And in the second place, my young Lochinvar, your job is to obey orders—not to question them."

"Sorry," I mumbled. "Sorry."

"Then get out of here and do as you're told," he snapped. "Otherwise—"

He didn't finish the sentence but I knew what he meant. If I didn't do as I was told—well, he had a way to make me obey orders. It wasn't a nice way, either.

I went out of his office, took an elevator down. "Damn him!" I thought. "If I ever get a chance—"

In the lobby a voice said, "Hi, Eric."

I was still thinking about what I would like to do to Small, and in spite of recognizing the speaker as one of the few friends I had left, I glared at him.

"You look unhappy," he observed. "Is your boss getting to you at last?"

"Why are you always hanging around this lobby, Jerry?" I queried, not answering his question. "What's up?"

He regarded me warily, his keen brown eyes searching my face hopefully. There was dandruff on his coat collar and his clothes were worn and his hat was old, but he didn't care. He was a reporter, perhaps the best in Chicago, and he had a nose for news that was almost phenomenal. When Jerry Wright was hanging around there was a story due to break. What story could be breaking here, I wondered.

"Will you help me, Eric?" he asked abruptly.

"Help you? What's wrong? If it's a loan—" I reached for my billfold.

He waved it aside. "I know you're in the money now, but I'm not trying to make a loan. I want help of another kind, Eric, and you're the man to give it to me—if you will."

I stared at him.

"You know what I mean, Eric, so don't try to stall," he went on. "I'm trying to get the goods on the most dangerous man in Chicago, a man who has his fingers in politics, the criminal underworld, and at the same time operates a legitimate business. I'm trying to get the goods on the biggest Big Shot of them all, so he can be put where he belongs, in the penitentiary. That man is—"

He started to say the name out loud, in the center of that crowded lobby, where a dozen different people might hear him. His words might easily be his own death warrant, and he knew it, and didn't give a damn.

That was a fair measure of Jerry Wright. He called a crook a crook and minced no words about it.

"Shut up, you fool!" I hissed at him. "Do you want to be found up an alley some morning with a slug in your stubborn head?"

I had good reason to be scared. The man he was talking about was my boss—Uriah Small.

I would have given my eyes to help him. But I

knew what would happen if I did.

I shook my head. "I don't know what you're talking about."

He sighed. "Eric, you were once a man. Are you so deep in this hellish business that you've lost every part of your manhood?"

"Skip it, Jerry. You don't know what you're saying." I tried to walk away from him.

He kept step with me. "Okay, I'll skip it, for the time being. But do you mind if I walk along with you?"

"Not at all. I'm going out to the suburbs to see an inventor. You can ride along with me if you would like."

"An inventor! That wouldn't be Peabody, would it? Hah! Are you sure you're not going to see his secretary instead?"

HIS question left me gasping in surprise. How had he learned about Peabody, I wondered. More perplexing still, how he had known the inventor had a secretary, or that I was interested in her?

He seemed to sense what I was thinking. "A good reporter makes it his business to know everything. Incidentally, the fact that you have the good taste to fall in love with Ann Hardy makes me think there is still hope for you, Eric."

He even knew her name!

"But," he went on grimly, "if you've made love to her without telling her what you are, so help me—"

"Listen, Jerry," I said quietly. "You may think you know everything, but there are a few things you don't know. One of them is the reason I work for Small, the reason I can't help you. Another is that I have not and will not make love to Ann—as long as I am what I am."

He studied me. "Forget I said it, will you, Eric? I can see there are some things I don't know. I can also see there is still a spark of decency in you. So skip everything, will you?"

We stepped out to the street. A chill November wind was whipping through the early dusk. The lights were already on and the shop windows were brilliant with electric signs. The sidewalks were filled with people—and most of them were looking up.

Across the darkening sky, heavy with gray clouds grim with the threat of coming snow—a light was moving.

A weird, incredible light, moving through the lower fringes of the gray clouds, like a huge ship glowing with some eldritch illumination. Without wings, with no sound of motors, it moved swiftly across the sky—and was gone. It wasn't an airplane, it wasn't anything that I recognized. Just the sight of it sent a strange chill through my bones.

I heard Jerry gasp. "A light in the sky. And almost exactly like the lights in the sky described by Charles Fort. Oh, golly, I wonder what it is."

I didn't know who Charles Fort was, but my guess was that he was one of the men who write Jerry's

favorite brand of literature—Science Fiction, which gives a glimpse of the amazingly versatile character that was Jerry Wright. During working hours he was a reporter, one of the world's best, a hound for facts. But when the day's work was done, he liked nothing better than a soft arm chair and a half-dozen magazines devoted to the imaginative adventures of super-scientists. Only to him the adventures were not imaginative. They were real. His favorite phrase was—"Science remaking a world—some day this will happen." And he firmly believed that the incredible things portrayed in the books he read would happen—some day. He read all the magazines devoted to that type of literature, and groused because there were not more to read. He wrote letters to the editors, praising his favorite writers, kicking the hacks in the pants. He had even written a couple of stories of this type—and collected rejection slips for both of them. He was a whizzer at straight news reporting, and he loved fantasy, but he couldn't write it.

Seeing a light move across the sky, he had instantly forgotten Uriah Small, he had forgotten the criminal organization he was fighting.

Writing these lines, long after the events of that terrible November night, I wonder why fate should have cast a science-fiction addict in the role of hero for an earth-shaking drama.

We had seen the first light move across the sky. The meaning of that phenomenon we learned later.

Too late—

CHAPTER II

Creatures in Armor

I FELT strangely upset on that long ride through the lowering November night out to the combination residence and laboratory of George Peabody. I think, now, that my strange feeling was a direct premonition of disaster.

When I pulled the car into the drive beside Peabody's neat white cottage, that queasy feeling of impending trouble rose to fever heat. Night had come, but no lights showed in the house.

More important still, in the brick laboratory at the rear, no lights were burning.

I knew Peabody. His life was spent in that lab. Only an earthquake could have pried him out of it.

Small had said, "See Peabody." When he gave an order, he expected it to be carried out. I got out of the car and circled the house, Jerry coming along with me. Then we started toward the lab.

Frankly, I had been hoping to see Ann. She should have gone home at five but Peabody's voluminous correspondence often kept her working overtime, and I had hoped that this might be one of those times.

The entrance to the lab was through a small office where Ann worked. The door had a glass front and I went up and tried to look through. There was only darkness in the office, and if lights burned in the lab

beyond, I could not see them.

"He's gone out for the evening," Jerry suggested.

"Not that man," I answered. "His idea of how to spend a gay evening is to stay cooped up right here."

"Well, he's gone," Jerry said. "Which reminds me—I haven't asked why you came out here. Or is that another of the things you don't care to talk about?"

His voice was edged and I knew he was thinking about my boss.

"Quit it, won't you," I growled, and then yelled. "Hey, Peabody, if you've gone to sleep in there, wake up."

There was no answer.

I rattled the door knob. It turned in my hands and the door opened. It hadn't been locked.

"What the hell?" I thought. Peabody, like all inventors, was secretive as the deuce and he always kept everything under lock and key. But this door wasn't locked. Perhaps Ann had forgotten to lock it when she left. But I knew that wasn't true. Ann didn't forget to lock doors.

What I did wasn't ethical, but I was worried about that unlocked door, and I poked forward into the office. I stumbled over something lying on the floor and swore at my clumsiness. Then I realized the object my foot had struck was soft and yielding, and my whispered profanity died on my lips.

THAT thing my foot had struck, it felt like the body of a man.

Fear froze me motionless. The body of a man! That was bad enough. But in the darkness I couldn't tell whether it was a man. It might be something else. It might be a girl, lying on the floor.

"What is it?" Jerry whispered.

"I don't know," I answered, fumbling for a match. When the little flame flared, the light showed me that my worst fears had been realized. A numb heavy sensation seemed to reach up and enfold my stomach.

Lips taped shut, arms and legs tied, disheveled dress revealing the tops of rolled stockings, the body lying on the floor was—Ann!

The shock stunned me so badly that I did not even try to light another match but dropped to my knees in the darkness, lifted her in my arms, whispered, "Ann . . . Ann . . ."

Jerry flicked on the lights. I saw her eyes were open. Twin pools of haunted terror, they looked up at me. But they were open.

She was alive. The tape over her mouth had silenced her!

I yanked it off. She winced at the sudden pain. We removed the wires from her hands and feet and she cuddled up in my arms like a badly frightened child.

"What was it, a hold-up?" Jerry questioned.

"I—I don't know," she answered, her voice jerky. "I finished work about five thirty and just as I stepped out of the office—something grabbed me."

"Did you see him?"

She shuddered. "It was dark and I only caught a

glimpse—"The shudder became a convulsive tremor and I had to hold her tight. "Oh, Eric, it was awful. There were two of them. They weren't human. . . ."

"What?" Jerry's voice exploded. "They weren't human? What do you mean?"

Again that convulsive tremor shook her body. "They—they looked like metal men. They were black and they had arms and legs, like men, but when they grabbed me, I felt their bodies—and they were hard. Their bodies were metal. They creaked as they moved, and their heads were balls of metal with two huge eyes. They talked to each other, but they didn't use words. They didn't make any sound when they talked. And they carried something that looked like a—funny gun. . . ."

I felt my flesh begin to crawl as I listened to her description. Metal men! What did she mean? What had she really seen? Had she been mistaken in the darkness or had she really seen something made of metal?

In the quietness of that small office the hiss of Jerry's suddenly indrawn breath was the only sound.

"Why on earth should ordinary crooks wear armor?" he whispered. "It's fantastic, inconceivable, unless—" He seemed to be talking to himself. "Unless they weren't ordinary crooks. Oh, Lord! The only reason anybody would wear armor is for protection."

THEN he said something that almost scared me out of my wits. "I wonder if that armor was really a space suit, designed to protect the wearer against an alien atmosphere. Oh, gosh! There was a light in the sky!"

His mind was leaping from fact to fact faster than I could follow. But I could follow the strange fear showing on his face.

"Space suits? A light in the sky? What do you mean?" I snapped.

He shook his head like a man coming out of a trance. "Skip it. I was talking to myself. That couldn't be true." He shook his head again, and turned to Ann, whom I had helped to a chair. "What did they do after they had tied you up?"

"They went back into the laboratory." She shuddered again. "I don't know what they did back there. I heard Mr. Peabody cry out—once."

Peabody! I had forgotten about him.

Jerry dived toward the lab and I started to follow him but he shoved me back and told me to take care of Ann.

I saw the lights go on in the lab and heard him moving around back there as I got a drink of water for Ann. As she drank I noticed she was wearing a new trinket, a round flat locket suspended from a chain around her neck. It was a rather unusual looking thing, but at the time I merely thought it was a new piece of costume jewelry. If I had known how much depended on that locket, I would have paid more attention to it.

Then Jerry came out of the lab. His face was white and his eyes had a shocked expression in which pain and horror were equally mingled. He closed and locked the door.

"What did you find?" I asked.

He shook his head at me, walked directly to the telephone, lifted the combination handset from its cradle. Seconds passed. The frown on his face deepened. He turned to Ann, asked tersely, "Is this phone working?"

"It was at five o'clock."

"Well, it's not now."

"Perhaps the crooks cut the wires," I suggested.

"Perhaps," he answered enigmatically. "Anyhow I have to make a phone call. You two wait here for me. I'll be right back."

His voice was calm. He apparently was trying to give the impression that he had suddenly remembered a call he had to make, but when he walked out of the office, I was right behind him.

"What did you find in there?"

"I found Peabody," he answered. "Dead!"

Subconsciously I had been prepared to hear what he said. When he came out of the lab and locked the door, I knew he had found something in there that he did not want Ann to see. So his words did not come as a complete surprise.

"Peabody's in there," Jerry went on tonelessly. "He's dead. And he died like no other man in all the history of the world ever died. His body is puffed up to twice its normal size. *Puffed up*, expanded. He was thin and slender but now he's fat and gross. It looked like every cell in his body had suddenly exploded, had puffed out to about twice its normal size. His flesh is bursting through his clothes. His skin is broken in a million places and a bloody plasma has oozed to the floor. His eyes are popping out of his head and his face is puffed up like a butter ball. I've seen a few dead men and I thought I knew what they looked like. But never in my life did I see anything like this. He died less than two hours ago but his body already looks like weeks of putrefaction have taken place. It was horrible—*terrible*. . . ." He gulped and choked over the words.

I was conscious of a sudden tense stillness in the night, a stillness in which I heard, coming from afar, a vast but subdued shouting, as of thousands, or millions, of voices crying out in fear. But I paid no attention to the sound. My mind was trying to grasp the significance of what Jerry had said. Peabody, whom I knew as a grubby little man, a shy, bewildered inventor—dead! He had never harmed anyone. He had spent his life in his laboratory, searching for answers to the riddles of science, and shrewder men had made millions out of his inventions. He hadn't an enemy in the world. But he was dead. Vaguely I remember thinking how irritated Small would be, for now the goose that laid the golden eggs was no more.

Then the full realization of what had happened swirled over me in mounting waves of terror. Suddenly I was trembling all over, my hands were shaking,

my legs were jerking, and as I tried to speak the chattering of my teeth cut my sentences into disconnected words.

"Jerry. . . What does it mean? What—happened? Who killed him? How? Why?"

"I don't know," he answered. "But I do know this: Hell is loose in this town tonight. Two creatures in armor invaded this laboratory, killed a defenseless man. Why did they wear armor? Why did they kill him? Worse still, what incredible weapon did they use that caused his body to puff out to twice its normal size?"

Out of all he said, I picked one word and gabbled it back at him in the form of a question.

"Creatures? *Creatures*—What do you mean?"

"I don't know. But we'll probably find out, before morning. . . ."

As he spoke the light streaming from the office window flickered and went dim. Jerry stopped speaking in mid-sentence. He whirled and looked toward the lab.

The light came on again, burned brightly. Ann came to the door of the office, stood in it and called out to us. Behind her the light died. I heard her gasp and then her heels clattered on the concrete as she came running toward us.

The light was gone. Simultaneously the street lights died. Down toward the Loop, where seconds before the sky had been glowing with light, there was darkness, sudden and complete.

In that darkness, coming from the distance, was a vast murmur, a throbbing, pulsing ocean of distant sound, a fearful, fateful roaring. It sighed and died when the wind died and came on with quickly renewed strength as the wind picked up.

And in the sky high over the city hung a huge globe of glowing light.

CHAPTER III

Death Panic

BEFORE we got to the Loop, the cars were whizzing by us. They were not passing us. We were meeting them. The drivers were gunning them as if the devil was following them.

"There's panic up ahead," Jerry muttered. He was leaning forward watching that light up in the sky. Ann, in the middle, said nothing. I was too busy trying to drive to talk.

There were people on the sidewalks, looking up. Many were getting into cars, joining those who were fleeing. The street was running curb-full of traffic and ninety-nine per cent of it was fleeing away from the Loop. We could only guess what they were fleeing from. The car radio gave us no information. It worked all right but the stations were dead. Probably the power failure had forced them off the air.

The streets were lighted only by the headlights of the cars. Houses were dark, street lights were off.

Ahead of us was a growing clamor composed of many sounds.

The cars suddenly thinned out but the street was alive with pedestrians. They were walking rapidly, some of them running, all of them constantly turning their heads to look back over their shoulder.

Stalled street cars were disgorging their passengers. We passed under the L and got a glimpse of a train stopped on its trestle. Apparently all transportation except cars and busses was stalled.

When the traffic thinned, I gave the car the gun and we zoomed forward, pedestrians dodging out of our way like panicky rabbits fleeing before a forest fire.

"Watch it!" Jerry hissed. "Traffic jam ahead."

That was why the cars had stopped coming at us. The street was blocked. I braked the car to a stop and Jerry leaped out and collared a pedestrian. The clamor of honking horns, the frightened swearing of harried men, made so much noise that I could not hear what he asked the man but I knew he was trying to find out what had happened. The man jerked away from him, scuttled out of sight. Jerry stuck his head in the window.

His voice was jerky. "He didn't know what had happened. These people are scared—that's why they're running, mostly. But there's something—very much wrong—up ahead. I'm going to try to find out. Are you coming with me?"

I shook my head. "We can't take Ann into—this."

"No," he agreed, shouting to make himself heard. "You take her some place where she'll be safe."

"I'm safer with you two than I would be anywhere else," she said. "I'm going with you. We'll all go."

We had an argument, Jerry and I on one side and Ann on the other. We lost. If we were going up into the Loop, where lurked the terror from which these people were fleeing, she was going with us. There was no argument about it. She was determined.

As soon as I got out of the car, I felt a strange pulsation begin to flow through my body. It began as a vague throbbing, a growing tension that seemed to reach hidden centers somewhere inside my skull. It was distinctly unpleasant but I could stand it.

Jerry eyed me. "Do you feel it too?"

"I feel something that makes me think a hornet is loose inside my brain. Is that what you mean?"

He didn't answer but turned and started fighting his way through the crowd. Ann and I stayed as close to him as we could.

Getting through the crowd was a struggle. The people were scared. They had lost all the veneer that civilization had laid on them and had become a mob in which every man was for himself. There were women and children in that crowd but they were not receiving any consideration. I heard a woman screaming that her baby was lost; the tiny, haunted voices of whimpering kids. We had no time to try to save them. Nor would we have been able to help them if we had tried. The crowd was a mob of maddened,

frightened beasts which was trying to flee from a common center.

As we fought our way through them the hornet in my brain began to buzz louder and louder.

Then the crowd began to thin out and we made better progress. Dying bulbs in stalled automobiles lighted our way. I saw why the crowd was thinning. The reason was on the sidewalk.

The sidewalk, the streets, were covered with dead. In places the corpses were piled three deep. Men, women, children. All of them were not dead. Some of them were trying to crawl. Others were piteously begging for help. Still others lay still and moaned. It was the most sickening, horrible sound I had ever heard.

How Ann stood it I don't know. But she marched resolutely forward behind Jerry.

What had killed these people? The question was a screaming, tortured whistle in my mind. What would we find, up there in the center of the Loop, when we reached the place we were seeking?

A hundred times I was ready to turn back, but Jerry went on, and Ann followed him, and I came behind. My head was beginning to throb like it was going to split open. At every step the torture seemed to increase. Bright spots began to dance before my eyes.

WITHIN a few blocks the dead began to thin out. They were thickest where the first pressure of the mob had trampled the weak under foot. Most of the ones who had died had been killed in that mad panic. But there were people here who had died from some other cause. What that cause was, I did not know, even when Jerry stumbled and went down to one knee.

He caught himself and instantly rose to his feet only to stumble again. Ann dropped to her knees beside him and as I tried to cover the few steps that separated us, I found I could not make it.

Bright spots were exploding in front of my eyes. My knees were buckling and the hornet in my mind was a buzz-saw that was splitting my brain wide open.

I knew, then, what had caused this panic in the first place, what had killed many of these people. Some subtle radiation was flooding through this area. From what source it sprang I could not guess—perhaps from that light in the sky. How it operated I could not understand, but I knew what it was for it was driving pangs of madness through my brain. I tried to get to my feet and stumbled and fell. I tried to crawl and my knees buckled. A vast, bottomless blackness came swirling down over me.

We had entered the Loop, seeking the cause of this incredible panic that had driven hundreds of thousands of people mad with fear. And the cause of the panic had found us. It had got Jerry. It was getting me.

As consciousness faded, the last sound I heard was Ann's sharp cry of fright.

FOR hours—or possibly it was minutes—I seemed to fall down a black hole that had no bottom. Then the torment in my brain began to go away, began to lessen. Fingers touched my forehead. The shrieking tumult died to a lulling murmur. I opened my eyes.

Ann had my head in her lap. She was rubbing my head with one hand. Jerry was holding on to the other hand as if his life depended on it. He was saying, "Don't you feel it at all, Ann?"

"I don't know what you feel," she whispered. "But whatever it is, I don't feel it."

"It's like a buzz saw," he explained, "running a million revolutions a second. It tears your brain all to pieces."

She shook her head.

He was puzzled tremendously. "There is no question about it then. They flooded this area with a super-sonic frequency that literally burst, by intense, continued vibration, the brain cells. It must have passed unimpeded through the walls of buildings and it probably killed a lot of people. The others took fright and fled, which accounts for the mad, panic-stricken mob that we had to fight getting here. I can understand all that. But the incredible thing, the thing I can't understand—" his voice dropped lower, "—is how it happens that you are completely immune to it. Not only that, but any person you touch is rendered immune, as long as you touch them. As soon as I fell, the touch of your hand brought me out of it. As long as I continue touching you, I'm safe. But the second I take my hand off you, that damned buzz-saw starts gouging grooves in my brain."

He released her hand only to grab it back as the torture cut lines in his face.

"That proves it. They are still bathing this area in that hellish radiation but you, alone, are immune to it."

The mad hornet in my skull was dying. Each time Ann touched my forehead the pain lessened. There was no doubt that Jerry was right. I moved my hands, and a second later was able to sit up. Ann's cry of joy when I moved did my heart good. They both tried to talk at once. I told them I was all right. Ann quit rubbing my forehead. Instantly the hornet buzzed again. I grabbed at her hand and the pain went away.

"Easy, Eric," said Jerry softly. "We're safe, as long as we hang on to Ann. But the second we let go—bingo!" He turned to her. "Think, Ann; do you know any reason why you should be immune?"

"No—" She hesitated. "Unless it's this." She ducked her chin to indicate the locket Peabody had given her, that trinket that I had thought was merely a strange piece of costume jewelry. Jerry needed only a second to run a test. He took the locket from around her neck, laid it on the sidewalk. She screamed and her face went white with torture. I, too, felt the renewed surge of torment in my mind. Working with lightning fast fingers, Jerry replaced the locket around her neck and grabbed at one of her hands.

"That proves it," he said. "That locket protects you. Where did you get it, Ann? That's the key that may unlock this whole mad business. Where did you get that locket?"

She told him.

"Ah, Mr. Peabody gave it to you? Did he tell you anything about it?"

"No. He merely said it was a present and he asked me to wear it day and night, if I didn't mind. But he told me nothing about it."

"The devil he didn't. But we know, now, that he knew they were coming. That locket proves he knew they were coming. And he also knew what weapon they would use, because he contrived a defense against it. Oh, hell! That's why they killed Peabody. Because they knew he knew about them. But how did he know? And what? Ann—"

He began to question her. But she knew nothing about the inventor's work. "He was experimenting with so many different things that I couldn't keep track of them."

"Jerry," I interrupted firmly. "Will you please tell me what you mean by 'they'?"

He gestured toward the sky and my eyes went up, fastened with rising dread on what I saw there.

A huge floating ball of fire hanging motionless in the sky!

"Didn't you know, Eric?" Jerry spoke. "They are the invaders, the creatures that have attacked earth."

The words registered all right. The men from Mars! They had come at last. They had smashed at Chicago with the devastating effects so brilliantly portrayed in that famous broadcast of 1938. Only this was not a broadcast, a fictional presentation. This was real.

JERRY looked at the glowing ball for only a second. He jerked his eyes down and looked at Ann as if a sudden thought had struck him. The question he asked her made me think he had lost his mind.

"Ann, those creatures in armor that tied you up—they used tape on your mouth. Did they bring that tape with them or did they get it out of the medicine chest in your office?"

It was the most nonsensical question I had ever heard Jerry Wright ask. In the midst of this horror, with invaders from space over-running Chicago, he was asking questions about the tape used on Ann.

"I don't know, Jerry. I—" The question surprised her too.

"Skip it," Jerry answered bluntly. "Come on. We're going to see how these invaders operate. As long as we hold on to Ann, we're safe."

Like frightened children playing some weird game in which it was necessary to hold hands, moving cautiously, keeping a sharp look-out ahead, we started down the street, searching for those incredible invaders that had launched this vicious attack.

We were in the heart of the Loop. All around us buildings devoid of light reached upward to the sky.

There was no sound, except in the distance the vague roar of the fleeing mob. There was no light here, where normally a million advertising signs blazed, except the weird glowing coming from the ball flickering in the sky.

Silence and darkness and death—

And with smashing suddenness, coming from somewhere within a block of us—the muffled roar of an explosion!

CHAPTER IV

The Invaders

WE came to the corner. Ahead of us along the street were—lights. We had found the invaders. Ann's soft gasp of fear was smothered in Jerry's hissed, "Sh! If they see us, we're sunk."

The lights were hand torches of some kind. They moved back and forth and I caught glimpses of the dark creatures that carried them.

Black, two-legged monsters! Alien horrors clad in bulky suits. They worked silently, going in and out of a building.

"So that's what that explosion was," said Jerry grimly.

To my question he explained, "That building is a bank. The explosion smashed the vaults. They're looting it, carrying gold and silver out to the street."

He was right. I could see the creatures come out of the bank, bent almost double under the weight of bars of gold. Under the direction of one who seemed to be their leader, they dropped the gold on a constantly growing pile, went trotting back into the building for more.

Super-thieves, who had crossed the wastes of space, searching for gold. And having found it here on earth, they were taking it. If they killed thousands of people, it did not matter. Gold was all that mattered.

"That proves it," Jerry said, loathing in his voice. "No race sufficiently advanced to be able to build space ships—"

His whisper died as a sound came from behind us. He jerked around, Ann and I turning with him. A band of the marauders was coming down the street toward us. The lights they carried outlined the sombre black bodies. The crash of broken glass showed us what they were doing—breaking windows and looting shops. They were slowly working their way toward us.

We couldn't run. We were trapped between two bands. More than that, we had to keep in direct touch with Ann. If our grip on her hands slipped, it meant terrible torture.

We slipped back into a doorway, hoping they would not see us when they passed.

"They'll find us here," I protested. "They're entering all the shops."

"You're right, they will find us if we stay here. But

we won't stay here. Not for another second, Eric."

He drove his heel through the plate glass of the door behind us. The night rattled with the sound of breaking glass.

"They'll hear that!" I hissed.

"I don't think so," he answered. "Unless I miss my guess, they can't hear worth a damn. Anyhow it's our only chance." He broke away the jagged edges of the glass and slipped through the door, pulling Ann after him. Poor Ann. We were dragging her deeper and deeper into danger all the time. But she didn't whimper. Her hand, firmly clasped in mine, was trembling, but she didn't complain. She had courage, and like a good soldier, she obeyed orders and kept quiet.

Jerry felt his way through the darkness toward the back of the shop. I heard him fumbling with the fastenings of a door and my heart surged with renewed hope. If we could escape through the back door and into the building!

Jerry groaned. "The door's made of steel. And it's locked."

We were caught like rats in a trap. Before we could move a beam of light flashed into the shop, darted over it, passed us.

"Down on the floor," Jerry whispered. "If they see us, they'll think we're dead."

He dropped to the floor, pulled Ann with him. But I had not been expecting the order. The beam of light came back before I could move. It outlined my body. I stood there like a rabbit caught by a sudden light flashed by a hunter.

If I had stood still, the creature would not have seen me, or having seen me, would probably have paid no attention. But when the light was full on my body, I dropped to the floor. The light flashed downward, held steadily on us. The creature had seen us.

"Damn you for a fool!" Jerry hissed. "If you had stood still, he wouldn't have seen us."

THREE of the creatures came poking through the broken door. One of them held a light on us, the other two covered us with stumpy, big-barreled weapons. Without making a sound, they lifted the weapons to their shoulders.

They were going to blast us, just as they had blasted Peabody. In less than seconds that hellish discharge would strike us and our bodies would puff out to twice their normal size.

Ann's soft cry of fright was the only sound in that terrible stillness.

But they didn't blast us. Why, I don't know, unless it was because they wanted to know how we had managed to evade the radiation that flowed through this area. The one with the light struck up the blunt-nosed guns.

They conferred in silence. There was not the faintest sound of any kind, yet they were obviously discussing us. Occasionally the round heads turned to stare in our direction.

They reached a decision. By gestures they ordered

us to rise, and they were quite determined about it.

"No! No!" Ann whispered jerkily, as if she could stand no more. Her hand, clasped in mine, was wet with perspiration.

"Chin up, Ann," Jerry grated. "Our only chance is to do what they want us to do. Otherwise—" He rose to his feet, pulling us with him.

I thought, as they marched us out of the shop and down the street, that the night had already brought all the horror I could stand. I thought nothing would surprise me any more. The landing of these fiendish invaders had been a terrible surprise. The incredible weapon with which they struck viciously at a defenseless city, killing thousands like I would step on an ant hill, gave me a new picture of ruthlessness.

But I was due for two more surprises, the second coming fast on the heels of the first.

They marched us down the street and into a building. At the entrance to the lobby of the building I got my first surprise.

It was a dead man, lying on the floor. The torches of our guards showed me his face quite clearly. Pale and white, his eyes closed forever, a halo of curly yellow hair falling down over his forehead, he lay there, like a youngster who has quietly gone to sleep for a while, the man who had made a single fatal mistake which had put him and me into the clutches of Uriah Small—my kid brother, dead!

Jerry didn't know that he existed. Nor did Ann. His shame was one secret that I kept.

Now the shame had been washed out in death. He was dead.

I stopped dead still and Jerry's eyes came curiously up to my face as if he wondered, when I had seen so many dead men, why one more should make any difference to me. Forgetting the creatures who were guarding us, forgetting the horror that lurked in the very air, I dropped to my knees, Ann's hands slipping from my nerveless fingers.

Instantly two things happened. That mad hornet surged angrily in my brain. And I was viciously kicked in the back by a booted foot.

In spite of the torture, I whirled and leaped straight at the throat of the guard. These creatures were responsible for the dead man on the floor. And if it cost me my life, all I wanted was to get my hands on one of them.

I leaped straight into the barrel of the quickly lifted weapon of the guard. It growled as he pressed the trigger and a surge of unutterable agony swept over my left shoulder and arm, hurled me to the floor. The other two lifted their weapons.

Ann, bless her, saved me. She stepped directly in front of the weapons and for one mad second I thought they were going to blast her. But in response to some command that I could not hear, they hesitated. Her fingers sought my hand and the screaming torture in my brain began to relax. At the same time, the numbness caused by the discharge of the weapon slowly lessened.

The guards gestured for me to rise.

"They're taking us to their leader, I think," Jerry whispered. "For Pete's sake, Eric, do what they want us to. It's the only way we'll find out the truth of this mess."

I wondered, as I climbed to my feet and walked into the building under the menace of those leveled weapons, what sort of a monstrosity their leader would be. I wanted to see this creature who had caused the death of thousands, who had plunged a whole city into mad panic. My only hope was that he would not be wearing steel armor, so my hands could tear at his throat as I died.

I did not doubt that I would die. Nor did I care. I would die gladly if I could take down to death with me the leader of these horrors who had destroyed my brother.

They ushered us through double doors, through a sort of a lock that had been obviously sound-proofed. As the inner door opened I took a deep breath and got ready to plunge.

But what I saw took my strength away, left me gasping, helplessly bewildered. I had expected anything, anything but this.

For the creature who looked up as we entered was no incredible, impossible monstrosity from across the gulfs of space.

It was Uriah Small.

My boss was the leader of these creatures! And he wasn't wearing armor.

CHAPTER V

Conquest

I SIMPLY refused to believe my eyes. Uriah Small, bad as he was, would not willingly become an ally of such monsters. He was human. He would not turn against his kind.

Even then, after we had been brought before my boss, I did not understand.

One of the guards pushed forward, wrenched at his helmet with both hands. The helmet twisted, turned, and swung to one side on hinges. I saw the head of the creature that was inside that suit of armor.

Something in me died when I saw him. He was no alien monster from across space. He was a monster all right, but he was one of the kind we raise right here on earth—a gangster. He spoke.

"We found these three hidin' in a store, boss. We was goin' to put the heat on 'em, but we got to wonderin' about how they managed to stay alive without no armor for protection. So we thought we had better bring 'em to you, because their staying alive might be important."

My mind was reeling. This mad attack had been launched by human beings. Jerry had been wrong. And Small *was* their leader. But what about that glowing light high in the sky, that thing that looked like a space ship? What was the explanation for that?

And, worse still, what incredible weapon did they possess and where had they obtained it?

"You did right in bringing them to me, Connors. This is important." He turned to us and his eyes were hard and merciless. The look of benevolence was gone from his face. He showed himself in his true colors.

"Talk fast. How did you get into this area and remain alive?"

He was worried about that. Badly worried.

"So it's you," Jerry answered. "And you want to know how it happens we're alive. How would you like to go to hell?"

A red flush splashed over Small's face. He looked like he was going to choke.

"I'll give you ten seconds to answer."

"Oh, I'll answer all right, but my answer will be the same—you can still go to hell. And if you think you can get away with this, you're badly mistaken. The army will be here before morning, with cannons and machine guns, and the air force, with bombers. What will you do then?"

"I pity any bomber that tries to approach this city," Small snapped. "Are you going to tell me what I want to know or am I going to have to take the information from you?"

"Suit yourself," Jerry shrugged. "If we tell you, you'll kill us anyway."

"There are ways of dying," Small said grimly.

"No doubt you know."

Small saw what he was facing. He rasped an order. The guards lifted their stubby weapons. Remembering Jerry's description of Peabody, I guessed what these instruments could do to the human body. And we were looking right into their muzzles.

"Now will you talk?" Small growled.

"You'll get no information from dead men," Jerry answered.

Small looked at Ann. A shake of the head was her only answer. She looked wan and tiny, like a fluffy white kitten facing a bulldog, but she had something she could use for courage.

He turned to me.

My heart climbed up in my mouth. I knew Small. He would carry out his threat. And I could see no reason for not telling him what he wanted to know.

"—"

"Tell him nothing," Jerry snarled. He turned to Small. "You slipped a cog, Big Shot, this time. You thought nobody, except your boys in armor, could enter the Loop tonight, and stay alive. But we did it. And others are doing it. The police—"

IT was a grand bluff and it might have worked, on somebody else. But not on Small. His face was set in a merciless mask, and I knew our lives were numbered by the seconds. He ignored Jerry. His eyes were fixed on me as he waited for my answer. He would not wait long, but he would give me a chance to speak.

Cold sweat popped out all over my body. If I said "No," we died, all three of us, and even if we died in a good cause, we would be dead nonetheless. But if I told Small what he wanted to know, I instantly forfeited what little respect Jerry still had for me. Both of them had more liking for dead heroes than for live cowards. They were facing death to keep Small from gaining information that was, in his eyes at least, of vital importance. If I fought on their side, I had no choice except to face death with them.

The tension of trying to decide what decision to make was tearing into my vitals when Small opened his mouth to speak. I instantly made my decision.

Growling, "You can go to the devil," I winked at him, imperceptibly nodding my head toward Jerry and Ann.

He saw the wink and instantly interpreted it. He knew I wanted to talk to him in private, without Ann and Jerry knowing.

His grin was wolfish with victory. He still had me under control, he thought.

"Take these two out of here," he ordered. "Find out how they got here alive. Make them talk."

As the guards hustled them out, I caught a glimpse of Jerry. I never saw such sick loathing on the face of any man—and he was looking straight at me! "Eric, you yellow rat—" he hissed as the doors closed behind him.

I was alone with Small.

"All right, my young Lochinvar," he said. "You had better talk fast."

Wiping the sweat from my face, I told him about the locket Ann was wearing and where she had gotten it. Also that there were no other lockets in existence, so far as I knew.

"Damn Peabody. I knew he was trying to double-cross me."

"You don't need to damn him. He's dead."

"Yeah," Small answered. "I know."

I hid my emotions, forced my face into a mask. Peabody and others were dead, and I was playing a desperate game.

"Boss, what's this all about? Why did you send me out to see Peabody? What's that light up in the sky? What are you doing?"

He looked at me, measuring me with his flinty eyes. I hoped my face would not give me away. If he once suspected me—But I had told him what he wanted to know, I had been his stooge for years, had taken his orders. His vanity alone would prevent him from thinking I had turned against him.

"I sent you out to see Peabody because I wanted you out of the way. I didn't exactly trust you."

"Not trust me! Haven't I always done everything you told me to do?"

"You have obeyed orders, but occasionally you acted as if you didn't like to."

He was suspicious all right. But I had to make him believe me. Again sweat was pouring over my body. I talked as I had never talked before.

And he fell for it.

"Peabody had made a most important invention, a super-sonic sound gun. With it, it was possible to destroy all life in a given area. He came to me with it and I saw its tremendous possibilities. I kept him at work until he had devised a hand-gun operating on the same principle, and also a suit of armor that rendered its wearer immune to the pulsations of the generator but not immune to the effect of the gun."

A little by little he told me the whole story.

His men had installed a super-sonic generator on top of one of the Loop buildings, knowing it would either destroy or drive away all persons in the area.

I nodded dumbly. "But that light in the sky, that thing that looks like a huge ship. You must have done that too."

"That was the neatest trick of all."

"I don't get it."

"Because you don't understand mass psychology," he answered. "If I suddenly used Peabody's generator, there would be death and shock and fright and hysteria. The whole nation would know that something was wrong, but no one would be able to guess the cause. But if a huge ship seemed to appear in the sky, everyone would immediately jump to the conclusion that earth had been invaded. The effect would be to paralyze all effective resistance, because a race that was far enough advanced to cross space would be too powerful to be resisted—I got the idea from that Martian broadcast. You remember it? The United States was supposed to be attacked by men from Mars. In spite of the fact that broadcast was obviously fictional, thousands believed it was the truth, and the country almost had a first class panic on its hands."

I REMEMBERED that broadcast and I saw with what devilish ingenuity he had planned. He had seen how badly the mythical men from Mars had scared a nation. His technique was simple and devastating. Anchor a large, luminous painted balloon in the sky. Millions of people will see it and the first vague fears will arise. Then start Peabody's super-sonic generator. The obvious conclusion will be that a death ray is being operated from the ship.

There was a flaw in his plan. I pointed it out. "Tomorrow your balloon will be discovered. The army air force will be here."

"Tomorrow we will be gone." He smacked fist into palm. "Everything is planned. We leave here long before dawn, by plane. The people who come here tomorrow will find a deserted, looted city, but they will not find the invaders." He laughed grimly.

"You'll be hunted all over the world. There isn't a place where you will be able to hide."

"You underestimate me," he answered. And then, in the words that followed I got a glimpse of the whole picture, the vast scope of his hideous plan.

"We'll stay hidden tomorrow, but tomorrow night a ship of fire will appear over New York, and before morning we will have looted the banks."

"By that time the whole country will be looking for you."

"Will be looking for the men from Mars and afraid they'll find them," he corrected. "No one will suspect the real source of the attacks. We will strike, in rapid succession, the largest cities in the country. Effective resistance will be disorganized. Half of the people will have fled from the cities to escape the devastating attacks. Within days we will have a large part of the wealth of the country in our possession. With wealth, and with the most powerful weapon ever discovered, in our hands, we will be in a position to take over the control of this country. Within a month, before anyone has discovered what is really happening, I will be head-man in this and other cities."

He was pacing back and forth, fist smacking into open palm as he planned the conquest of the American underworld. Whatever else could be said of Small, he played for big stakes. Like Napoleon, he dreamed no little dreams.

And his hideous plan had every chance of succeeding. Its very audacity was in its favor. That men from Mars angle, creatures in tremendous space ships with unknown but very terrible weapons, would panic an army corps.

He turned to me. "I can use you, Martin," he snapped. "You can be my right hand man. There will be wealth in it for you, and power."

His two gods, wealth and power, the deities he worshipped. He was offering me a cut of his taking.

Never in all my life did I hate anyone as much as I hated Uriah Small at that moment.

That savage, wolfish grin was on his face. He was licking his lips, dreaming his foul dream of conquest. "After we have control of New York, the next step will be San Francisco—I will be king of the underworld!"

I HIT him then. My left started low and came up in a sweeping arc, gaining power as it moved, and when it reached his mouth, every bit of energy in all my muscles was behind it. The muscles in my big toe, the thigh muscles, the banded sheaths in my back, the biceps in my left arm—all their power was behind my fist. And driving those muscles was the surging viciousness of a bitter hatred.

I had tricked him. I had learned what I wanted to know. I had gotten his men out of the room.

My fist smashed into his mouth. Pain flashed up my arm. The grin on his face froze into a look of surprise horror. "That's for one of the dead men outside," I snarled. His head jerked backward and he slid to the floor.

He was down, but he wasn't out. Surprised, shocked, stunned, but not out. He was a big man, weighing well over two hundred, and hard.

He shook his head and started to scramble to his feet.

I kicked him in the jaw. Blood spurted outward and something that I recognized as a tooth flashed

from his mouth, hit the floor and rolled to the corner.

Sure, I know you're not supposed to kick a man when he's down. But I wasn't fighting by the rules that govern the ring. I was fighting by the oldest set of rules known to man—the law of survival. The second I swung on him, I knew my life was not worth a snowball in hell—if I lost. It was kill or be killed. And he had forfeited all claims to fair play.

That kick in the mouth touched off a spring of vicious fury. He came to his feet in a single tigerish bound, throwing his fists as he came. Pile driver blows smashed into my face, slugged into my body.

He was a lashing tornado, a fighting fury. Head down, apparently blind, he swung his fists, uttering growling animal cries. He kept forging ahead, forcing me backward, utterly oblivious to any damage I might inflict on him, with only one thought in his mind—to kill.

Human flesh could not long withstand his battering. If one of those blows connected cleanly—

I had only one chance: to cover up until his fury spent itself. Ducking away from him, pushing lefts at his head, twisting to avoid the full force of his fists, rolling them off my shoulders, I backed all over the room. Gradually his strength failed until his arms began to sag. I didn't have much strength left myself, but I had enough to step in close and drive home a left and a right to the chin.

He sagged downward, his face a twisted mask of bloody surprise, out!

I had won! The thought was a pounding tonic in my brain. I had won. Victory!

Now this mad nightmare would end. The tragedy that threatened America was averted.

I stood in the center of the room, panting for breath.

The sound of an opening door came from behind me, sent painful chills of sudden terror down my spine. Whirling I saw a sight that almost made my heart stop beating.

An armed guard was coming through the inner door, a stubby sound-gun under his arm. He was untwisting his helmet.

That fact probably saved my life. If he had not been busy with his helmet he would have recognized me.

He jerked it to one side, thrust out his hand. "Here it is, Boss," he gloated. "This thing is what saved 'em."

His words drooled into surprised silence as he recognized the battered hulk on the floor. The sight seemed to paralyze him.

But what he had in his outstretched hand paralyzed me even more.

Dangling from a broken chain was the locket that Ann had worn, the magical locket that had protected her, and Jerry, from the hideous effects of the super sound.

They were without protection. They were dying, perhaps were already dead!

As I leaped the words echoed and re-echoed in my

mind like a sullen dirge—"Dead . . . Dead . . . Ann and Jerry . . . Dead. . ."

CHAPTER VI

Traitor!

I WAS already on the verge of exhaustion. The fight with Small had taken almost everything out of me. But now I had to face an armored, armed thug. Against his armor my fists would be useless. Knuckles would smash into a bloody froth against padded steel. His mailed arms would crush me down.

Sure, I was leaping to my death. It wasn't heroism, either. It was the cornered tiger fighting as he dies. For I would die. I had accepted that as fact. My only hope was to do as much damage as I could before death came, before the guard's gun bloated my body out of recognizable shape. As I dived toward him, I saw him fumbling for his weapon.

Weirdly, that gun saved my life, that and the armor the thug wore. The gun that I thought would blast me, the armor against which I thought my fists would pound to a froth—saved me.

The armor made the guard clumsy. He was like a man in a diving suit. He had been carrying the gun under his arm. When he saw me coming he grabbed for it—and dropped it.

I dived for it, got my hands on it, hugged it to my chest as I rolled over and over like a mechanical monkey that has lost its string and is performing on the floor. No doubt my antics were clumsy. I was a man fighting not only for my life but the life of the girl I loved.

The thug charged toward me. He froze to instant immobility when he found himself looking into the muzzle of the gun.

"Take me to the prisoners." My voice was a whisper but he knew I meant what I said.

Like a robot he pivoted on his heel, started from the room. I grabbed the locket from the floor, where he had dropped it, took one last glance at Small as I left. I knew I should tie him up, but he looked like he was so hopelessly out that he wouldn't be able to move for hours. Besides, he couldn't leave the room, for he was not wearing armor. I didn't have any time to waste on him. I had to get that locket to Ann and Jerry. Minutes counted. Seconds—

The guard shoved his helmet down over his face, stepped into the hall, turned down it. There was danger in that hall. If we were seen—

We weren't discovered. My guide plunged through a door. Two armored, hooded figures looked up as we entered, only to freeze when my gun covered them. At my harsh order their weapons slid to the floor and they turned to face the wall.

Light spraying from a hand torch showed me two figures on the floor. I took one look at them and my heart sank.

White and wan, they looked like they were already

dead. This room was not sound-proofed, and the blast from the terribly penetrating radiation swept through here. Ann and Jerry writhed with a slow twisting movement, their eyes closed, their bodies jerking with a spasmodic muscular contraction.

I brought their hands together, the locket firmly clasped between them, meanwhile keeping the three thugs covered with the gun.

An eternity passed while I waited. If I had known any prayers I would have said them. Had I come too late? Had the beating pulsations of the super-sound already smashed their brains?

Little by little the muscular jerkings ceased. The lines in their faces began to smooth out. I held my breath.

JERRY opened his eyes. He looked at me and then stared in bewilderment around the room.

"Jerry. . . Jerry. . . Are you all right?"

His eyes focused on me. I had expected to see thanks in them but instead I saw a burning bitter hatred. He didn't say a word.

Then Ann began to recover. I sobbed in thanksgiving. I had come in time. They were saved.

"Where's Small?" Jerry asked abruptly.

While I rubbed Ann's temples, I answered his questions. "He's back there in his sound-proofed room—knocked out."

"I hope, for your sake, you're telling the truth," Jerry answered. His voice was bitter and hard, with tones in it I had never heard before. It startled me and I twisted my head to stare at him and look straight into the muzzle of one of the sound guns the two guards had dropped on the floor. Jerry was holding it. While I was busy with Ann, he had picked it up.

He was pointing it at me. At me!

"Drop that gun," he ordered. From suddenly nerveless fingers my weapon slid to the floor.

"What do you mean?" I gasped.

"I mean I'm not certain what kind of a rat you are, Eric Martin. If you're telling the truth about Small, I'll apologize. But until you prove you're not lying, I'm remembering three things: The first is, it was your clumsiness that caused us to be captured. There is a big possibility that you wanted us to be captured. The second thing I'm remembering is—you worked for Small, knowing him to be a criminal. That makes you a criminal too. The third thing is—I saw you wink at him. Why did you give him the high sign, Eric?"

I got it then. Of all the things that had happened to me, that was the worst. Small had not trusted me. He was afraid I was honest. Now Jerry was holding a gun on me, because he thought I was a crook. I choked, and protested weakly.

"But—but I saved your life. I brought this locket back to you. . ."

"That's why you're alive right now," he answered.

Involuntarily my eyes went to Ann. Her face was alive with a bitter loathing. Tears were running down

her cheeks. During all the things that had happened, she had not cried. But she was crying now. "Why did you do it, Eric?"

She believed it, too.

I told them everything. When I got to the part about the dead man lying in the entrance of the building, my voice broke again. "That was the reason I worked for Small. My kid brother had a job with Small's company. In a moment of weakness he embezzled several thousand dollars. Before the theft was discovered, we went to Small and offered to repay the money. Small wouldn't take it. The theft had given him the hold he wanted over all the men who worked for him. He threatened my brother with the penitentiary, and he would have put him there, if both of us hadn't done exactly as we were told to do. That's the reason I took orders from a man I knew was a crook. . . ."

"I hope you're telling the truth, Eric," Jerry answered slowly, a wary compassion in his voice. "You say you knocked Small out after beating hell out of him. I'm willing to believe it if you can show me."

"Come on," I answered.

MARCHING the three strangely docile thugs ahead of us, we went down the hall of Small's sound-proof office. We shoved through the double doors. One glance and I knew the worst had happened.

Small was gone. Somehow he had regained consciousness and had secured a suit of armor. He was gone.

Jerry leaped to one side, his gun coming up to cover me and the three crooks at the same time. Now that we were here, we did not need the lockets to protect us.

"He was here," I whispered weakly. "He must have—escaped."

"That's too bad," Jerry answered. To Ann, he said, "Get away from him."

"Give him a chance, Jerry," she pleaded. "Perhaps he is telling the truth. Perhaps Small really escaped."

"Let him prove it mighty quickly then," he rasped. "We've got to get out of here and we don't have any time to waste."

My heart leaped. Ann was defending me. She believed in me! That alone was enough to make my heart leap. But I had just thought of something else, a way to prove my story about Small.

I faced Jerry. "I beat Small up and I can prove it."

"Prove it then."

"The proof is right here in this room. There is blood on the floor."

"That proves nothing."

"Look at my hands." I held up my gory, battered fists. He glanced at them and then at me. Blood on the floor might prove nothing but the combination of my battered fists and a bloody spot on the floor was a strong point in my favor. Jerry hesitated and I rammed home my last point.

"Finally, there in the corner is the tooth that I kicked out of Small's mouth."

He grunted like he was surprised, but he bent down and examined it. Then he stood up and came across the room, holding out his hand.

"Eric, I apologize. You don't have the imagination to invent a story about kicking a tooth out of a man's mouth, so your story must be true. Under ordinary circumstances, I would say that you're a dirty fighter but in this case I can only say I'm sorry you didn't kick all his teeth out."

My breath exploded in a panting sigh of pure relief. How close I was to cracking up I did not know, but I must have been already over the borderline. When Jerry and Ann had turned against me, had suspected me of being in league with Small, I had experienced the most hopeless feeling there is—that of not having a friend in the world. I think I would have cracked completely if I had not been able to convince them of my honesty.

At last I was fighting with the people I wanted to fight with, at last I was on the side I wanted to be on, the side that Jerry was on, and Ann.

"We've got to get out of here," Jerry said. "And I think I know how we're going to do it." His eye was on the three guards. He stepped up to them and there was no mistaking his meaning. Even if the helmets were sound-proofed—I had vaguely wondered how they managed to talk to each other when wearing those suits of armor—they understood what he meant, and began to strip.

As they discarded their armor we put it on.

It was only then that I fully realized our plight. For, when the helmet came down over my face, I heard a voice. It was a voice I recognized, and it was coming from the helmet. Small's voice.

"When we attack from the outside, you three jump them. Do you understand, Conners?"

The suits were equipped with small radio transmitters and receivers. That was how they talked to each other. Small, from somewhere outside, was planning to attack us. And he was ordering these three men to jump us the minute the attack started.

That was the reason they had been so strangely docile. They had been in communication with him all the time. They had reported every move we made.

"Out of here!" Jerry snapped, swinging his helmet shut. The last words came over the radio.

WE KICKED open the double doors. From the front four figures in armor were coming toward us. Lights showed at the back of the corridor. We were caught between two forces.

"Across the hall and up the stairs," Jerry ordered. "It's our only chance."

He leaped into the corridor, Ann and I right behind him. The air hummed with the pressure of terrible sound as the guns hurled death at us. Agonies sliced through my body.

If they had known exactly when we were coming,

we wouldn't have had a chance. But they didn't know, and before they could bring all their guns into action, we were across the corridor and up the stairs.

We made it to the second floor, went on up to the third. But as we retreated upward, I knew we were trapped. Small and his gangsters held the lower floors. They would hunt us down like rats.

We didn't have a chance in a million of escaping.

CHAPTER VII

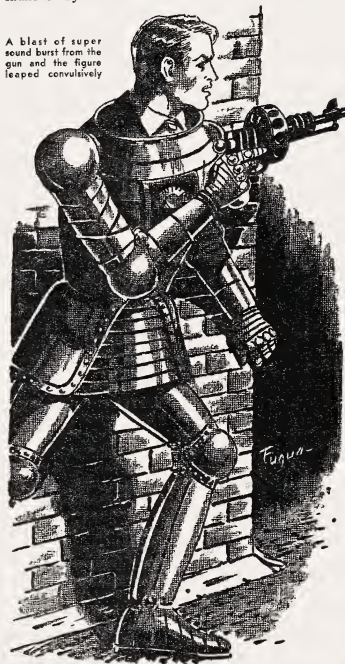
The Fight on the Roof

I TOLD Jerry what Small had told me. He grunted derisively.

"I suspected that all along."

"What? You suspected that this attack had been launched by men?"

A blast of super sound burst from the gun and the figure leaped convulsively



"Something like that. You see, the creatures that killed Peabody used ordinary adhesive tape to tie Ann's mouth, which immediately labeled them as gangsters from earth. The second reason—they were looting the banks. Gold and silver might have some value to invaders, but certainly not enough value to justify an attack as vicious as this one. The third reason—"

"But you led me to believe exactly the opposite!" I gasped.

"I didn't exactly trust you at that time, Eric. Since the light in the sky was obviously designed to give the impression of an attack from space, I fell in with that idea to test you out. I'm sorry, now, but at the time I didn't think I could trust you."

Another voice grated in my earphones. It was muffled and indistinct, but I could still understand it.

"I heard them talking. Fifty thousand dollars to the man who gets them."

"Small! He heard us over the radio in these suits."

"Yes," Jerry answered. "He can't afford to let us escape. We know too much. Nor can he afford to go off and leave us here alive."

"Damn him," I grated. "I should have killed him when I had the chance."

"You're exactly right," Jerry answered.

"No!" Ann protested, her voice fluttery but emphatic in the earphones. "You shouldn't have killed him, Eric. That would have been murder. I—I couldn't have stood that."

"I don't understand. He deserves to die."

She didn't answer. I could hear her sobbing and I was afraid she had been hurt. But she was all right. I couldn't understand what was the matter with her.

"You're a blind fool," Jerry said. Instantly his sound-gun throbbed. I couldn't see what he was shooting at, but his tense whisper ordered us up the stairs.

It was blacker than the darkest midnight. Jerry had a flash but he did not dare use it. There was no light of any kind, no faintest ray of illumination. We couldn't see the men who were stalking us. Nor could we hear them, for the suits shut out sound. If we opened them up, super-sound would come in, for unquestionably Peabody's sound generator was still functioning. I asked Jerry about that.

"Sure, it's still running," he grunted. "Small wouldn't dare turn it off until he is ready to leave. I'd like to know where the damned thing is located."

"And how it operates," I added.

"Oh, I know how it operates. It merely generates sound waves of a very high frequency, too high to register on the ear, and these waves set up sympathetic vibrations in other objects. It is tuned to produce a frequency that the human body cannot withstand, and the result is a particularly unpleasant form of death in which the cells of the body explode, the brain going first."

For hours, it seemed to me, we retreated from the face of death. Occasionally we caught snatches of

conversation between our attackers, and once Small's strident voice came through the earphones. He was talking to us, offering us our lives if we would lay down our weapons and join forces with him.

"No, thanks," Jerry answered for all of us. "I don't believe we would live long after you got your hands on us. Anyhow I would rather be dead than hooked up with you. Death is honest."

A string of curses answered him.

"He's getting desperate," Jerry said. "If he doesn't catch us before morning, our goose is cooked."

We heard Small increase his offer to his men to a hundred thousand dollars. They were willing enough but they had to come to us, and when they came, death leaped at them from the muzzle of a gun poked around a corner. When they got to the corner we were gone. I wished we had had the other two sound-guns, but we had left them in the room where he and Ann had been searched and hadn't had a chance to get them again.

We reached the roof. Ann saw it first, and her soft call whirled Jerry around. Above us, at the top of a flight of stairs, was an open door. Through it a misty light was coming.

We had retreated as far as we could.

"Our best bet is to go out on the roof and block the door. Then, when they attack, they will have to come from only one direction. We'll have a chance to fight them off because we will be able to see them before they are able to see us."

"What if they get on other buildings?" I protested. "They can pick us up in perfect safety."

He sighed. "Eric, you can think of the damnest things. If we stay here, they'll see us outlined against the door above us. Our only hope is the roof. The only thing I don't like is the fact that this door is open. Wait, Ann! I'll go first."

His tone jarred me. He obviously suspected something, but what it was I didn't know.

LIKE an Indian on the warpath, he slipped up the metal stairs. Ann and I clung together and watched. Was something waiting for him, and for us, out there on the roof? Had we come this far only to run into a trap from which there was no escape, with enemies above and below us?

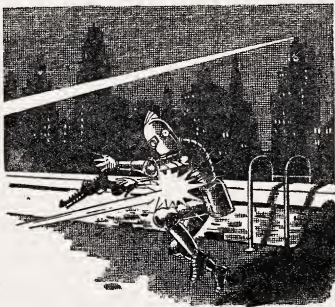
He knelt in the open door, watching, listening instinctively even if the helmet did cut off all sound. Then he straightened up, his gaze suddenly fixed.

He had seen something. But what?

I did not dare ask him what. If Small's men had climbed the fire escapes and were waiting for us on the roof, our radios had probably already betrayed us.

Jerry stared, not moving a muscle, his armored body looking like a grim robot outlined against the sky. Then he moved. Slowly he unhooked the handlight from the clip on his belt. With a quick motion he turned it on. The bright beam lanced out. Simultaneously he flung it out on the roof.

It was a ruse, designed to betray into movement



any enemy who might be lurking on the roof.

And it worked.

I caught the faint throb of a sound-gun and a dark figure leaped toward the light. Simultaneously Jerry's gun came up, and a blast of super-sound caught the figure that had leaped toward the light. Against the sky, I saw him throw up his hands. He fell softly, in utter silence, and Jerry leaped out.

There had been one man on the roof. Were there others?

I leaped right behind him. As I fumbled in the darkness for the weapon of the dead man, vaguely I felt the fluttery pulsations of another sound gun in operation. There was another man on the roof.

I found the gun and whirled to help Jerry. In the dim light I saw—two figures on the roof. One of them was trying to rise. I jerked up the gun, but a weak voice whispered to me. "Eric . . . Eric . . ."

It was Jerry. I had almost shot him.

"There were only two," he whispered as I helped him to his feet. "I got the second one before he saw me—but he got one blast at me." His voice was thin with pain. By an obvious effort of will, he steadied himself. "Get Ann out here and lock the door. We've got—work to do."

At my call, Ann came up the stairs. I slammed the door behind her and turned to Jerry when something moving overhead caught my eye.

The thin clouds were gone and the sky was clear. The bright lights of a million stars glittered in the dark vault of heaven. The huge luminous light that had looked like a space ship was gone. But something else was moving in the darkness.

Airplanes. Army planes. Fighters. In perfect formation they came down, shutting off the stars as they moved. I could not hear the motors nor see the markings on the wings, but I knew what they were. Uncle Sam's fighting birds. They were coming to investigate this phenomenon that had appeared in Chicago. The sight sent a mad surge of hope through my heart.

"We're saved. We can signal to them."

"How?"

"With your light. They'll see it."

"By heaven, Eric, you're right. I know the Morse code, or I knew it when I was a kid. If I only remember enough of it, we can use my flash as a blinker."

He picked up the light, began blinking it at the sky, spelling out word by word a trembling message to the planes.

If they only saw the light!

They saw it. The ships turned and dipped, came lower, still in perfect formation, and I saw they were diving down to investigate our blinking light. Now, even if Small killed us, his plans were thwarted. If the army knew what they were fighting—

The planes came down in a long diving slant. I shouted until I thought my lungs would burst and the sound washed back into my helmet.

We were saved.

THEN my shouts gurgled voicelessly in my throat and my heart seemed to leap up into my mouth. For the planes wavered. They broke formation. Like suddenly wounded hawks, they fluttered in the air, spun downward out of control. Down they came, toward the wilderness of roof tops, down toward the city, falling—out of control.

Jerry cursed and ran across the roof.

Three flashes lit the sky.

Jerry's voice was screaming in my helmet. "They hit the super-sound area and their pilots lost consciousness. It was my fault. I should have known what would happen."

He groaned out the words. Ann and I ran toward him. We found him kicking an instrument to pieces.

"This is that damnable generator," he screamed. "I saw it from the door and I should have put it out of operation before the planes came down."

The generator was here, on this building! We had found it, and had destroyed it—too late. Three planes had smashed and had exploded when they hit. Men had died.

But if one hope of salvation died when the planes went down, another rose to take its place. For he had found the generator. And had smashed it. If more planes came, they would not find invisible death waiting for them. Surely, with the dawn, more planes would come, if we could last that long.

We barricaded the parts of the broken generator against the door of the roof, yanked off our cumbersome suits of armor, piled them as additional protection against that door, hunted up the guns of the two guards, grimly began our wait.

Would Small come? Or would he try to flee, now that he must know we had found and destroyed the device that protected him from attack from without?

Grimly we waited, guns ready. The air was chilly, without the suits of armor. In the east the stars began to blink out and the day began to come.

We heard a pounding against the door.

"They'll never get through that barricade," Jerry exulted. "We've got them whipped."

I hoped he was right but privately I had doubts. I knew Small. He would never give up.

Silently the minutes ticked away and silently we waited. Always we watched for planes but no more came. The east began to glow with a milk white light as the first streaks of the dawn appeared.

There were no more attacks against the door, no more pounding.

"I tell you we've won," Jerry whispered.

As if in refutation the dawn was split with the roar of an explosion. The air blast lifted us, hurled us backward, almost to the edge of the roof where twenty-two stories of nothingness yawned below us. Bits of metal fell around us, and the door, blown clear off its hinges, flashed across the roof and struck the opposite building with a resounding clang. It banged and clattered against the side of the building as it dropped downward to the street.

Small's men had used explosives to blow away the door, just as they had used explosives on the bank below. Nitroglycerin.

We scrambled to our feet. And just in time. Out of the black opening where the door had been belched a horde of armored figures. Two, three, four, five six—we were attacked.

How can I tell you of that battle on the roof, twenty-two stories above the deserted streets of stricken Chicago? We sprawled face down, digging our chins into the gravel roof, all three of us, for Ann had a sound gun and was using it now, bless her! She had not wanted me to kill Small, when he was defenseless, but when we were attacked, she fought shoulder to shoulder with us.

WE WERE hidden targets, lying flat on the roof.

They had to see us before they could blast us. That was all that saved us from the first fury of their charge. As they erupted out of the black hole that led below, we poured a solid stream of super-sound into them. Men went down, and the air was cut and twisted and torn by the mad fury of the fluttering sound.

We were fighting for our lives, and more, but so, after a fashion, were the criminals who attacked us. For death waited for them if they failed. They fought madly, asking no quarter, charging, now that the nearing dawn marked the time when they would have to fight not only us but others if they did not win, straight at us, disregarding death if they might destroy us.

Six men came out of that door. Two of them died before they located us. But the remaining four charged, firing as they came.

If they had stopped to take aim they could not have missed. But if they had stopped, they would have been easy targets for us. They fired as they ran, and the fringes of the sound washed over us. I felt a million knives of agony cut through my body. But the sound was thrown from the guns in a concentrated

beam and only a direct hit would kill.

Out of the door diving toward me came a black, monstrous figure. He was on me. I hurled the sound gun full in his face and closed with him, fists and knuckles against padded steel.

I went down before that charge. Stars swam before my eyes when my head hit. A heavy boot crunched against my skull. My arms closed around it, and I pulled with all my strength. His legs came out from under him and he fell.

Over and over we rolled, fighting, punching. My fists did no damage and his heavy armored hands mauled me. Vaguely in the distance I heard someone screaming—the wild voice of a man raised in a scream of black, berserk anger. What was happening I did not know. Nor care. I was fighting my last fight. I knew it was my last fight. And I was losing it. But that did not matter so much, for I was fighting on the side I wanted to fight on, right against evil.

My antagonist scrambled away from me, lifted himself to his feet. The heavy, metal shod boot swung again at my head and I thought the end had come. But something hummed with a vast fluttering and the man suddenly stumbled and fell. He was dead before he hit.

The panic-stricken face of Ann looked down at me. She had saved me. It was her gun that had finished my opponent.

I had no time to thank her. The sound of crunching feet told me that Jerry still had a battle on his hands.

I forced myself to my feet, staggered toward him.

Black against the dawning sky, I saw him lift the man with whom he was fighting. Up over his head he raised the bulky, armored figure, and for a mad second they were silhouetted against the bright lights of the coming morning. Where Jerry got the strength I did not know, unless he had gone berserk. But he lifted that man in armor in his arms, lifted him over his head, legs and arms flailing helplessly.

Then he ran swiftly across the roof and hurled his burden outward!

Instinctively I knew who that man was, knew who, in poetic justice, it had to be.

It was one of those moments when time seems to stand still, when everything happens in slow motion. The armored figure, legs and arms twisting as he

clutched for supports that were not there, seemed to hang in the air. Then he started to fall, and the scream retched from his throat as realizing what had happened to him penetrated even through his helmet, the horrible shriek of a man with death upon him.

He went out of sight over the edge.

I closed my eyes.

After a century of slow motion time, back from the street twenty-two stories below came the sobbing echo of a heavy thud. The echoes floated back and forth across the silent city.

I think, at that moment, I felt sorry for Small. It was such an awful way to die.

JERRY staggered toward us, and fell heavily. I gathered him in my arms in time to hear him whisper, "I'm—done . . ."

Aghast I stared at him, saw the pulse of grayness creep across his cheeks. His eyes closed.

"He's dying," I whispered to Ann.

As I held him in my arms I was no longer sorry for Small. His ambition had killed this man, and many others. He deserved to fall twenty-two stories and splash himself to nothingness against the concrete.

Jerry's eyes opened. He looked at me and a ghost of a grin showed on his face. "Eric . . . Eric . . . Old man . . . Did we win?"

Dumbly, I nodded.

"That's good . . ."

His eyes closed again, only to flutter open. He seemed to be out of his head. "A light in the sky! A ship coming in from space someday that will happen. Someday . . ."

His eyes were up, he was looking at the thinning stars in the dawning sky. "Someday—a real ship will come in from across space . . . I can see it now in the sky . . . Coming . . ."

His voice failed and his eyes closed again, but they did not open this time. They stayed closed—forever.

The coming day found planes roaring down the sky, and soldiers in uniform. Ann and I stayed on that roof until they found us.

Small's evil dream of power was done, his faked space ship was gone from the sky forever.

I hope, in the Valhalla of heroes, there are stacks of magazines and soft arm chairs, so that a hero who loves fantasy may read forever.

Says Everybody is Hypnotized

A strange method of mind and body control, that often leads to immense powers never before experienced, is announced by Edwin J. Dingle, F.R.S.E., well-known explorer and geographer. It is said to bring about almost unbelievable improvement in power of mind. Many reports of improvement in health. Others acquire superb bodily strength, secure better positions, turn failures into success. Often with surprising speed, talents, ability and a more magnetic personality are developed.

The method was found in remote and mysterious Tibet, formerly a forbidden country, rarely visited by outsiders, and often called the land of miracles in the astounding books written about it. Here, behind the highest mountains in the world, Mr. Dingle learned the extraordinary system he is now disclosing to the Western world.

He maintains that all of us are giants in strength and mind-power, capable of surprising feats from the day of old age to the prolonging of youth, and the achievement of dazzling business and professional success. From childhood, however, we are hypnotized, our powers put to sleep by the suggestions of associates, by what we read, and by various experiences. To realize their really marvelous powers, men and women must escape from this hypnotism. The method found by Mr. Dingle in Tibet is said to be remarkably instrumental in freeing

the mind of the hypnotic ideas that paralyze the giant powers within us.

A nine-thousand word treatise, revealing the many startling results of this system, is now being offered free to anyone who quickly sends his name and address. Write promptly to the address below, as only a limited number of the free treatises have been printed.



The Institute of Mentalphysics, Dept. B-114, 213 So. Hobart Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif.



The TIME



Pete Howell discovers a strange valley where time travels along strange paths and the course of events seems all mixed up, and somehow filled with deadly danger

JULIAN '39
KRUPA

MERCHANT

BY FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER, JR.

PETE HOWELL paused on the crest of a small rise, adjusted his knapsack, wiped a scattering of sweat from his brow. Below him the ragged slopes of the Ozarks swept down toward an empty valley; the gnarled, wind-bent gum trees were like weary giants struggling up the rock-strewn mountain-side. Wild, desolate country . . . which is what Pete had hoped for. Fifty weeks in the National Electric testing laboratories had filled him with a thorough loathing of cities and streets, stone and steel, electric generators and all that went with them. On this, his third day out of Fayetteville and the fourth of his precious fourteen, he was about as far removed from civilization as even the most ardent back-to-nature enthusiast could wish for. Mountains . . . forests . . . sky . . . and enough canned goods in his knapsack to carry him through. Before the two weeks were up, Pete knew, he would be sick of pork and beans, eager to see the city, the N. E. laboratories again. But right now he was content to drink in the smell of the pines, to let the brisk mountain wind blow

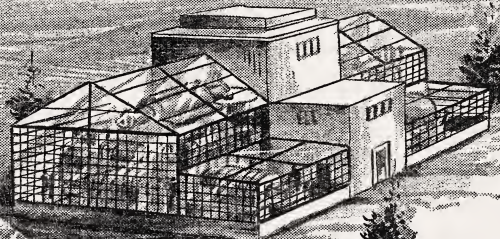
all thoughts of watts, dynamos, coils, from his mind. Sight of the sun, blazing like a red flare behind the neighboring hills, aroused Howell. Better to push on, find a good camping spot . . . by a stream, if possible . . . before dark. Humming softly to himself, Pete started up the slope.

The grade grew steeper as he climbed. From the looks of it, it was a sort of razor-back ridge, pebbly, bare of trees . . . and as such, the view from its crest would probably reveal a stream or spring. Panting, he pushed on.

At the top of the ridge Pete halted, grinning a trifle sheepishly. All his Daniel Boone-ish feeling of being alone with nature left him. For on the other side of the rise, at the base of its sharp incline, lay a small, very neat, clapboard cottage of the mail-order variety. Pete had a sensation of being cheated; a picturesque mountaineer's shack, or a moonshiner's still would have been fine. But this immaculate little suburban-type house destroyed all the romance of the wild, rugged, pine-swept hills.

Howell was just about to turn away, head for less civilized parts, when he spotted the chimneys. Tall, round, unquestionably factory smoke-stacks, they loomed above the trees perhaps half a mile beyond the cottage. And curiously enough they were painted, like the house, a splashed and dappled green. Howell ran a hand through his fulvid, fox-colored hair. A mottled green . . . as though hoping to avoid detec-

Below us lay a valley, and a strange glass-walled factory, filled with strange machines



The TIME



Pete Howell discovers a strange valley where time travels along strange paths and the course of events seems all mixed up,—and somehow filled with deadly danger

MERCHANT

BY FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER, JR.

PETE HOWELL paused on the crest of a small rise, adjusted his knapsack, wiped a scattering of sweat from his brow. Below him the ragged slopes of the Ozarks swept down toward an empty valley; the gnarled, wind-bent gum trees were like weary giants struggling up the rock-strewn mountain-side. Wild, desolate country . . . which is what Pete had hoped for. Fifty weeks in the National Electric testing laboratories had filled him with a thorough loathing of cities and streets, stone and steel, electric generators and all that went with them. On this, his third day out of Fayetteville and the fourth of his precious fourteen, he was about as far removed from civilization as even the most ardent back-to-nature enthusiast could wish for. Mountains . . . forests . . . sky . . . and enough canned goods in his knapsack to carry him through. Before the two weeks were up, Pete knew, he would be sick of pork and beans, eager to see the city, the N. E. laboratories again. But right now he was content to drink in the smell of the pines, to let the brisk mountain wind blow

all thoughts of watts, dynamos, coils, from his mind.

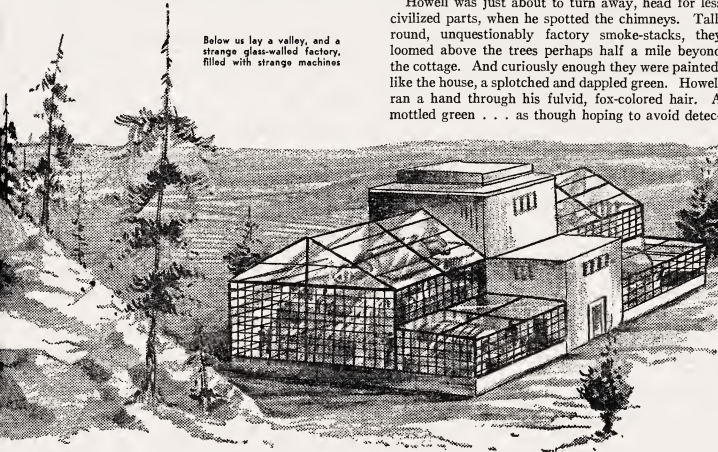
Sight of the sun, blazing like a red flare behind the neighboring hills, aroused Howell. Better to push on, find a good camping spot . . . by a stream, if possible . . . before dark. Humming softly to himself, Pete started up the slope.

The grade grew steeper as he climbed. From the looks of it, it was a sort of razor-back ridge, pebbly, bare of trees . . . and as such, the view from its crest would probably reveal a stream or spring. Panting, he pushed on.

At the top of the ridge Pete halted, grinning a trifle sheepishly. All his Daniel Boone-ish feeling of being alone with nature left him. For on the other side of the rise, at the base of its sharp incline, lay a small, very neat, clapboard cottage of the mail-order variety. Pete had a sensation of being cheated; a picturesque mountaineer's shack, or a moonshiner's still would have been fine. But this immaculate little suburban-type house destroyed all the romance of the wild, rugged, pine-swept hills.

Howell was just about to turn away, head for less civilized parts, when he spotted the chimneys. Tall, round, unquestionably factory smoke-stacks, they loomed above the trees perhaps half a mile beyond the cottage. And curiously enough they were painted, like the house, a splotched and dappled green. Howell ran a hand through his fulvid, fox-colored hair. A mottled green . . . as though hoping to avoid detec-

Below us lay a valley, and a strange glass-walled factory, filled with strange machines



tion from the neighboring mountain-tops. Camouflage. . . .

It was at this instant that the pebbles at Pete's feet leaped up in a spurt of dust, while from somewhere, far away, came the faint crack of a rifle. Shooting . . . at him! Wildly, instinctively, Pete leaped . . . and as he did so, his feet slipped on the rounded stones. One moment's recollection, he had, of tumbling down toward the cottage in a small avalanche of dirt and gravel, then his head met a tree stump and the world dissolved into galaxy after galaxy of bursting stars.

HOW long he lay unconscious, Pete was not sure. He knew it wasn't a very great while, because the sun was still lighting the western sky when he opened his eyes. This observation on his part was, however, purely mechanical; it was impossible to think when his head felt as though a dozen devils were working upon it in the approved Cruikshankian manner. Dazedly Pete lifted an exploratory hand, withdrew it, sticky with blood. Limp, sick with pain, he gave a hoarse cry for help.

Immediately the screen door of the cottage slammed. A girl, slender, yellow-haired, wearing jodhpurs and sweater, appeared on the porch. Again Pete called, and the girl's eyes turned toward him.

"Dad!" she exclaimed. "Someone's fallen down the slope! He's hurt!"

A spare, stoop-shouldered man emerged from the house, peered near-sightedly through gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Where, Kit?" he asked.

"Here." The blonde girl ran toward Pete. "Hurry!"

"Fell," Howell muttered as she knelt beside him. "Hit stump!"

"Don't try to talk." The girl stood up, turned to the lean, grey haired man. "Take his head. I'll take the feet. If we can get him inside—"

Together they managed to carry him into the cottage, stretch him upon a divan. Through pain-glazed eyes Pete could make out what appeared to be rows of beakers, retorts, shelves lined with bottles, all carefully labelled. And in the background a tangle of electrical apparatus. A laboratory . . . here in the middle of the Ozarks! A laboratory, and he had come here to forget them! Unless this were a hallucination of some sort. His brain was so cloudy. . . .

Very deftly the old man washed the gash on Pete's forehead.

"Deep cut," he muttered. "And a nasty bruise. Slight concussion maybe."

Pete groaned. The pain pulsed in white-hot spurts through his head, agonizing, unbearable.

"Killing me!" he choked. "Can't you . . . do something? . . ."

The blonde girl glanced questioningly at her father.

"Got any opiates?" her glance swept the crowded shelves. "If we could make him sleep. . . ."

"Nothing here." The lean man shook his head. "Of course they'd have some over at . . ." he hesitated, with a quick glance at Pete, but the girl, nodding, seemed to realize where he meant.

"No good," she said. "If Carran discovered we had an outsider here your contract'd be void. We're taking a big enough chance as it is."

Pete twisted helplessly. A thousand headaches all rolled into one, tortured him.

"We're helpless, Kit" . . . the grey-haired man was speaking again . . . "cases like this mean eight or ten hours of agony before the pain dies down. Normally they're given dope, allowed to sleep it off. This poor fellow'll just have to take it."

The girl's gaze turned to Pete's face. She watched him grit his teeth, clench his fists, as the maddening ache increased.

"Eight or ten hours. . . ." Suddenly she turned to her father. "Dad! How about X-1?"

"X-1!" the old man exclaimed. "Good Lord, Kit, you've got it! But . . . but he's liable to realize. . . . And if it got out, Carran'd be wild!"

"He won't remember," she said. "Besides, it's only a few weeks more before the whole world knows. And he's half-crazy with pain."

Her father hesitated, then, as Pete shuddered, nodded.

"Right," he said. "We'll put him in my room!"

Not caring much whether he lived or died, Pete allowed himself to be carried into an adjoining bedroom. The girl drew the heavy shutters, excluding the golden afterglow. The grey-haired man appeared from the laboratory with a glass of water, a small vial. Ten hours, Pete thought. Ten hours of this hell before the pain began to subside! And he knew he wouldn't be able to sleep. . . .

"Here!" The old man extended a small green pill, the tumbler of water.

Automatically Pete placed the pill on his tongue, gulped it down.

"Right!" A faint smile crossed the man's thin, gentle features. "Come, Kit!"

A moment later the door had closed behind the girl and her father, leaving Pete in the complete darkness of the room.

CHAPTER II

Tangled Time

LYING there on the bed, Pete Howell gripped the edge of the mattress convulsively. Impossible to sleep, to think, even. . . . Ten hours here in this darkness, with his head splitting! Slowly the leaden minutes dragged by, weighted with pain. Then, after what seemed about half an hour, the throb in his head began to die down. Before he knew it, the pain had disappeared. Pete, eyes fixed on the ceiling, drew a sharp sigh of relief. Whatever the green pill had been composed of, it had worked. More, he felt completely

rested, although his eyes were heavy, somehow strained. He seemed cramped, too, as though he had lain in one position for hours. These, however, were minor drawbacks. The main thing was the fact that the pain had gone. Now, perhaps, he could sleep, although he didn't feel much like it. Pete was just closing his eyes when the door opened, and the blonde girl entered. She had changed from jodhpurs to a gay print dress, and her face in the shadows seemed bright, fresh.

"How goes it?" she asked cheerfully.

"Fine, thanks," he replied. "My head's come back to normal. And so quickly, too. I almost feel as though I could eat a bite of supper before going to sleep."

Laughter, gay and sparkling, filled the room.

"Supper?" the girl said. "You mean breakfast, I think." She crossed the room, fumbled with the catch of the shutters. Pete gave a sudden gasp. Streams of yellow morning sunlight poured into the room!

"Good God!" he whispered. "I . . . I . . . But I haven't been asleep! I know it! I've been lying here with my eyes open! For half an hour, no more! Unless . . . unless this bump on my head . . ."

"It's not that. You're quite sane. And don't worry. We'll explain later." She smiled. "I see from your knapsack that your name's Pete Howell. Mine's Stone. Kathryn Stone. Everyone calls me Kit. Come on out to the porch and soak up a little sunshine while I get breakfast."

Dazedly Pete followed her through the laboratory onto the porch in front of the cottage. He had, he knew, lain there only half an hour, three-quarters, at most. His eyes had been open the entire time. And now it was morning. . . .

"Sit down." The girl motioned toward a big rocker on the edge of the porch. Pete subsided into it. The morning was bright, the sunlight's warmth tempering the cool breezes. Bird cries, the chatter of squirrels, rose above the rustle of the trees.

"Gosh!" Pete leaned back and let the sun sweep over him. "This is swell! And" . . . he sniffed . . . "bacon and eggs! I've been fed up on canned beans!"

Kit Stone laughed, puckishly.

"I'll make sure you enjoy them," she said. "Wait here!"

SHE disappeared into the house, returned with a glass of water, a reddish capsule, offered them to Pete. For a moment he hesitated, then, remembering the efficacy of the pill of a half-hour . . . or, apparently, ten hours . . . before, dutifully swallowed it.

"Good," Kit nodded. "Don't worry about breakfast. You'll find it the best you ever had . . . if you like my cooking."

Then she was gone, but from inside he could hear the clatter of pots and pans. Pete relaxed in his chair. It seemed, somehow, as though falling down the hillside had plunged him into another world. The strange night that had seemed so short, the laboratory inside,

this girl and her father, buried in the wildest section of the Ozarks. And what of the chimneys he had seen, the shot which had caused him to land in this queer place. . . .

Deep in thought Pete lay back in the rocker, staring at the green hills. Life seemed slow, quiet, drowsy, among the mountains. A feeling of lazy calm gripped him; turning over the queer events of the past night in his mind, he sat there in the patch of sunlight.

Time dragged indefinitely. Pete glanced over his shoulder toward the window. How long it was taking the girl to fix breakfast! He had been sitting there ages. Must be nearer lunchtime than breakfast. Though the sun hadn't shifted its position. Strange . . . An odd sense of panic swept over Pete. What was wrong with this place? Time was somehow scrambled. A half hour last night between dusk and dawn. And now hours, sitting here in the sunlight, yet the shadows on the lawn had scarcely moved! The thing confused him, sent his weary brain spinning. . . .

A cheery hail from across the clearing interrupted his thoughts. Kit's father, Mr. Stone, was walking up the path toward the cottage. Pete stared . . . and once again a feeling of disbelief seized him. It was taking Mr. Stone an incredibly long time to cross the hollow!

Pete Howell, for all of his being fed up with laboratory work, was an excellent scientist. His mind worked along purely logical lines. Now, as he fixed his gaze on the lean, grey-haired man moving toward him, he tried to reason things out. Why should Mr. Stone, to all intents and purposes, take long, interminable minutes to cross a hundred feet of the clearing? The distance was what it seemed to be . . . perspective proved that . . . nor was the spare figure moving slowly. Stone was, in fact, moving at a brisk, if somewhat shambling, gait. There was, then, only one alternative. Something in his brain must be speeded up. Between his subconscious notations of Mr. Stone's progress, his brain must be receiving a great many more thought impulses, thus making the time seem longer. This would be borne out by the fact that to a brain concentrating on a single problem, time flies; while to one at rest, idly taking in dozens, hundreds, of subconscious impressions, flickering from subject to subject, time drags. But on the other hand. . . .

Mr. Stone's endless journey across the clearing had ceased; he commenced the tedious ascent of the steps. It seemed fully five minutes before he reached the porch level, grinned.

"You're looking lots better," he said. "How about breakfast?"

Pete nodded, arose. The trip into the house, however, shook him. It seemed to take ages. Yet he, like Mr. Stone, was moving at a perfectly normal rate. The thing was ridiculous. Ravenous hunger and the smell of food, however, drove curiosity from his mind.

"Lo, Dad!" Kit grinned. "Pete, here, said he

liked bacon and eggs, so I gave him a dose of X-2 to make sure he'd enjoy it."

"You shouldn't have." Stone shook a sombre head. "Carran's in an ugly mood this morning. And one of the guards said he saw someone yesterday, fired at him. This young man must leave as soon as he has eaten . . . for his own sake."

Pete wasn't listening. He had already commenced on the bacon and eggs. It was, he felt, the strangest meal he had ever eaten. It seemed to take hours . . . hours of sheer delight as the taste-buds of his lips and tongue revelled in crisp bacon, well-done eggs. He thought of the Christmas dinners as a boy when only the tightness of a well-filled stomach prevented his commencing all over again. Or the ancient Romans who disgorged a meal so that they might have the delight of eating another. Eating . . . one of the few physical, primitive pleasures of life, stretched out indefinitely. Grinning, Pete stoked himself, making up for the supper he had missed the evening before. The delight of satisfying a ravenous appetite, lasting, apparently, hours . . . !

WHEN he had at last finished . . . it seemed as though it should be nearly sundown . . . Pete pushed back his plate.

"Thanks," he said. "I needed that. And now, if you'd just tell me what this is all about, I'd be grateful. Time . . . everything . . . is so mixed up. . . ."

Mr. Stone lit his pipe. Endless minutes seemed to drag by before he spoke.

"I guess we do owe you an explanation," he admitted. "But you've got to promise to say nothing of what you've seen and heard . . . got to forget you even saw this place. You and the rest of the world will know soon enough."

Pete nodded. "I promise," he said.

"Good." Mr. Stone arose, fumbled along a shelf. "You're still under the influence of X-2. I'll give you a bit of X-1 to counteract it, bring you back to normal."

Pete drank deeply of the proffered draught, felt the sense of dragging slowness disappear.

"Ah!" he nodded. "Now tell me what's been happening to me?"

Mr. Stone puffed at his pipe in silence a moment. A clink of dishes sounded from the kitchen as Kit piled them in the sink.

"Time," Stone said reflectively, "is a tricky business. We have to disregard the evidence of our five normal senses in considering it. Thus if a man runs toward us, we say it takes him a short time to reach us. And if a baby crawls toward us, we say it takes him a long time. That's the normal deduction from the five senses. But time, as far as human beings go, is dependent upon not physical actions, but upon man's mental conception of it. Thus, if we were on fire, and the man running toward us carried a fire extinguisher, it might seem like hours before he reached us. Or if we were deeply interested in something, a

book, a conversation, the crawling baby might seem to reach us in no time at all. You begin to see what I'm driving at? It's the mental conception of time that really counts. You've read of the minute that seems like a year, you've probably stood on a corner waiting for someone and had it seem like ages. At the dentist's time drags, on your lunchhour it flies. Understand?"

"Right!" Pete nodded. "Yet I don't see just why. . . ."

"I'm not so sure myself. We all know of persons who can awaken at certain hours if they wish. That's the time-sense. . . .* but our mental clocks are not infallible, need the support of watches, sunlight, and other physical checks. Thus when a man concentrates, his brain waves, distorted by mental effort, will lose their rhythm. On completion of his lengthy mental task he will have no idea how long he has been at it, since his mental clock has been stopped. Big, well-spaced waves on our charts or short, close ones, indicate a speeding up or a slowing down of the mental clock.

"Now let's suppose I sit here and smoke a cigarette, an operation which normally takes me eight or nine minutes. And suppose my mental clock is speeded up so that a graph of its progress shows twice the number of zig-zags, of mental impulses than usual. Then, since my brain clock is wrong, the smoking of the cigarette seems to take twice as long. Or, reversing the process, it might be made to seem half as long a period of time. That was what I based my experiments on. I knew that hashish could distort the mental clock . . . persons under its influences have said that a minute seems like an hour, that some simple action, such as crossing a room, seems interminable. Breaking down hashish, I discovered X-2, which has the property of slowing down mental time. X-1 followed shortly afterwards, a natural corollary of the same process."

"Ah!" Pete nodded. "Then they're the green and red pills you gave me?"

"Exactly. The coloring is artificial to aid in telling them apart. When we brought you in, suffering from that bump on the head, and found we had no pain-killers, I gave you a double dose of X-1, the green capsule. The entire ten hours of night, which would have been spent in agony, passed in what seemed to you a half-hour. Then Kit, as a joke, I suppose, gave you X-2, the red pill, which stretched the pleasure of satisfying a keen appetite over what, mentally, was hours. Those two events, Mr. Howell, are symbolic of the future of the world!

"When I discovered these amazing drugs, I took

*It has been proven that we have, in addition to our accepted five senses, a sixth, a time sense. Regular waves, issuing from the occipital lobe of the brain have been recorded. Charts made at N. Y. U. show a steady rhythm from the brain. These brain waves occur even when asleep, in what are called spindles, forming a sort of mental clock. Professor Edwin G. Boring of Harvard made tests of awakening persons from sleep and asking them to guess the time. Their answers were far above the factor of chance.—Author.

them to Mr. Thomas Carran, a wealthy industrialist. He at once saw the tremendous consequences, the great happiness to mankind that must result. Here Mr. Carran has recently set up a factory for the manufacture of the two drugs, keeps it well guarded for fear some one may discover the secret. When we're finished, the time drugs will be put on sale.

"Think what this means, Mr. Howell! Men who have dull, tedious jobs . . . in an assembly line, say . . . will be able to take X-1 and their long day will seem to pass in a half-hour or so! And on their time off, their parties, movies, ball-games, recreation, will seem to last five or ten times as long. The very reverse of present conditions . . . today, dull work seems interminable, good times seem to race by! But with Timeite, X-1 and X-2, a new era awaits mankind! We will be able . . ."

"Dad!" Kit ran in from the kitchen, her face suddenly pale. "Carran . . . coming here. If he sees Pete . . ."

HOWELL and Mr. Stone sprang to their feet; the older man's eyes were wide with alarm.

"Mr. Carran's eccentric," he muttered. "You'd better . . ."

It was too late. The cottage door burst open, a big, red-faced man stepped into the room. Behind him stood two lanky mountaineers carrying rifles.

"Ah!" Carran's bluish jaw thrust forward. "I believe, Dr. Stone, that our agreement calls for no contacts with the outside world until Timeite is on the market. This is my private property . . ."

"But he was hurt!" Kit burst out. "We couldn't leave him lying there half-dead, in agony!"

Carran smiled thinly.

"He was trespassing, wasn't he? And now he knows too much. Walker" . . . he motioned to one of the mountaineers . . . "take this man to the plant and keep him there!"

Howell leaped back as the lean hill-billy moved toward him.

"You're crazy!" he exclaimed. "You can't hold me here . . . a prisoner! Hell, that's kidnapping!"

"Call it what you like," Carran grunted. "Take him along."

The mountaineer stepped forward, gun thrown over his arm. And Pete dove . . . low and hard.

Things happened fast. Walker crumpled and his rifle roared, tearing a hole in the ceiling. At the same instant Pete lashed up with a hard brown fist, sent Carran spinning against the wall. Just as he was about to leap through the door, however, the second of Carran's two guards came to life, raised his rifle. Pete brushed it aside and a moment later he and the guard were rolling about the floor, a bewildering tangle of arms, legs, and profanity.

"Go to it, Pete!" Kit Stone cried, reaching for the fallen rifle. "I . . ."

Shaking his head clear, Carran sprang forward, seized the rifle from the girl.

"Get up!" he growled, prodding Howell in the back. "You win!" Dismally Pete arose from his adversary, lifted his hands. "What next?"

Dr. Stone, who had been standing in stunned silence, wheeled on Carran.

"You're mad!" he cried. "Mad! What difference if this man does know what we're making? All the world will know in a few weeks! If you think my daughter and I are going to stay here while you carry on in this insane manner, you're mistaken! Contract or no contract, I'm leaving! And I'll see that the police learn about this . . . this kidnapping!"

Carran laughed heavily, deliberately.

"You're a fool, Stone," he grunted. "D'you think I ever had any intention of letting you or your daughter leave here? You who know the formula of Timeite? Or your daughter, this man, who probably have enough information to aid in recreating the formula? Not by a damn sight! When Timeite is placed on the market there's going to be one man who possesses the secret! Yours truly!"

"But . . . but . . ." Old Stone blinked. "I don't understand! We were going to put X-1 and X-2 on sale at a moderate rate to be a great benefit to the world! Why . . ."

"Because" . . . Carran was breathing hard . . . "I'm going to be the Master of Time! You claim it will take expert chemists years to break down Timeite, obtain the formula . . . and by then I'll be running all America . . . all the business world! Sure, Timeite'll come cheap . . . at first! I'll probably give it away for the first six months. And it'll sweep the country like wild-fire. Who wouldn't want his working hours cut to a quarter, an eighth . . . and his pleasures doubled, trebled? Men, women, and children will all go for it. Minutes of work, study, as against hours of pleasure. And Timeite isn't habit-forming so the drug laws can't touch me!"

"You begin to see, Stone? Six, eight months for America to become accustomed to Timeite, for it to become indispensable to them. Timeite, release for the masses, and Carran, the national benefactor, hero of the workers. Then, I begin to make my demands. Control of finances, control of big business! Unless granted, no more Timeite! Back to a schedule of eight long hours of work, fleeting moments of enjoyment."

"D'you think the public'll go for that? Not on your life! They'll grant me anything to get their Timeite. And if anyone tries to use force, I'll threaten to blow myself, the formula, and the factory sky-high, losing Timeite forever! That will bring 'em around! In another week I give the world time, and am hailed as a benefactor . . . in a year I am in control of all business—made better than a War Dictator, eh?"

"Once in power I suppress all research into the secret of X-1 and X-2 under threat of life imprisonment with a daily ration of X-2 to make that lifetime seem centuries! Then I introduce Timeite into other nations, businesses, make them dependent upon me . . ."

Carran's flaccid lips were flecked with white spots. Apparently the lust for financial power was more than a mere obsession. Pete Howell shook a hopeless head. This madman, the Master of Time! All humanity at his feet, begging for the precious gift of time control . . . It was like a fantastic dream. . . .

"Come!" Carran suddenly adopted an urbane air. "You will be my guests at the plant!"

SILENTLY they left the cottage . . . Stone, bent, somehow broken, Kit, chin high, eyes scornful, and Pete, bewildered, raging inwardly at the luck which had led him into this insane place.

Followed by the armed guards, the little procession crossed the clearing, took a path through the pines. At length a large group of buildings, painted green, loomed ahead. A deep whirl of machinery, the voices of men, were audible.

"The home of Timeite," Carran said to Pete, with an elaborate gesture. "Here we manufacture time for a work-weary world!"

Through windows Pete could see stolid workers tending the great machines.

"My men," Carran announced. "They'll obey me in anything since their working hours, by virtue of X-1, seem only a few minutes. And their off-hours, interminable." He pointed to a large building at his right. Through its open door Pete made out a bar, card games, painted women dancing to the tunes of a nickelodeon. "The night shift, off duty. Their hours of relaxation seem endless. A preview of the world of the future!"

Kit Stone averted her eyes, clung to her father's arm. A moment later they had entered a large, brick building in the center of the factory grounds.

"Here!" Carran unlocked a heavy iron door. "Your quarters! I've had them ready for some time, though I didn't anticipate our young friend here. With you three secure, the secret of Timeite is safe. Make yourselves comfortable." Grinning, he shut the door.

Pete Howell glanced about. Their prison was more of a suite. Two rooms and a bath, furnished with steel furniture and a supply of books, a deck of cards, a checker board. The windows were barred, the walls and floor cement, and no electrical outlets. Outside, Pete could hear the ceaseless drone from the factory. Machines, he thought, turning out time!

CHAPTER III

How Long Is Five Minutes?

"**R**ED queen on the black king," said Pete, kibitzing automatically.

Kit Stone swept the cards into a heap.

"I'm sick of it!" she exclaimed. "Sick of the whole thing! Solitaire, books, sitting around here day after day while Carran goes on making Timeite, preparing to make himself a financial giant! And the worst of it is, he's probably crazy enough to put it over! If

only we could get out of here . . ."

"How?" Dr. Stone said wearily. "We've been over that a hundred times. No tools, no electricity, no weapons. Cement walls, ceiling and floor. And the rooms examined every day to make sure we're not up to anything."

Kit picked up a heavy metal water carafe.

"This'd make a good club," she said. "Maybe when they bring us our supper . . ."

"You've been reading too many novels," her father said dryly. "Their guns would cut us down before we'd made a move. There's nothing we can do! Nothing! While Carran . . . If I'd only realized what he was up to! Timeite reducing working hours to apparently a fraction, making pleasure last five or ten times as long! How can the world help but take to it? And then, when he threatens to cease supplying it, they'll grant him anything! Slaves! Slaves of time! And us, helpless . . ."

"Helpless?" Pete, who had been automatically riffling the cards, ran a hand over his stubby jaw. "Mr. Stone, suppose we could break down this door? What then?"

"There's a phone in the office," the older man replied. "We'd make a dash for it, call Fayetteville, the police there, tell them how to reach this place. But it's out of the question! No way to escape . . ."

Pete Howell threw the cards onto the desk.

"Ever hear of William Kogut?" he demanded.

"Kogut?" Kit repeated. "Somehow the name . . ."

"His case is famous," Pete explained. "He was in the death house at San Quentin prison, cheated the gallows by blowing himself to bits. And do you know what with? An ordinary deck of cards!"

"Cards?" Mr. Stone muttered. "They're cellulose, of course. But you need nitrogen for trinitrocellulose. And even if we obtained it . . ."

"He only used the *red* portions of the cards," Pete said. "Some dyes, like Para red, have considerable nitrogen in their make-up. And we might be able to blow down the door . . ."

"It's a chance!" Kit exclaimed. "Let's try it."

Very carefully they tore the red pips from the cards, placed them in the metal carafe, and with the addition of water, pounded the mixture into a pulp. The container, its cap screwed tightly on, was then hung from the lock of the door, and the remains of the cards, along with pages torn from the books, placed on the cement floor under it. By the time all arrangements were complete, the factory was shrouded in night.

"All set!" Pete stooped, lit the paper beneath the carafe. "We'd better duck into the next room!"

In the adjoining room they huddled against the wall, waiting, Kit pale, tense, Mr. Stone's hollow eyes aglow with hope. There was no sound except the drone of machinery outside, the crackle of the burning paper. Pete froze, waiting. Already the paper must be about burnt up. Unless something happened in the next few moments . . .

And then a giant hand shook the room. The explo-

sion in that small place was deafening. Pete ran into the next room, gave a cry of triumph. The massive iron door had been torn from its hinges!

"Quick!" Pete sprang through the opening. "If we can reach that phone before they realize what's up . . ."

THEY clambered over the blasted door, raced along a corridor. From the factory, the recreation hall, came furious shouts of alarm. Suddenly the corridor ended. They found themselves in a big storeroom, heaped with small red and green boxes labelled "Timeite." Ready for an unsuspecting world, Pete reflected. He dashed through the storeroom, called to Kit, who was lagging behind.

"Coming!" she ran lightly forward. "The phone's in Carran's office upstairs!"

Up the steps they pounded. The shouts, the excitement, rose momentarily. A meek-faced secretary met them at the landing, gasped a weak cry for help. One blow of Pete's fist sent him, limp, to the floor.

"Here!" Mr. Stone pointed to a ground-glass door. Howell burst open the door, found himself in a spacious office. Kit, who followed him, snatched a phone from the desk.

"Police Headquarters at Fayetteville!" she exclaimed. "Hurry!" Swiftly she snapped out her message. She had barely finished when footsteps sounded in the hallway.

"Drop that phone!" said Carran harshly.

Kit whirled, found herself facing the muzzles of rifles, of Carran's automatic. The big man's eyes were wild.

"I knew I should have gotten rid of you three!" he growled. "Well, it's not too late!"

"You're wrong!" Pete grinned. "The police know we're here, now, and are on their way! If anything happens to us, you'll be held!"

For a long moment Carran was silent; at length he turned to the men with him.

"Tie them up. Then tell the others that we've got 'em, that they can go back to work. I'll handle this situation."

THE men bound their three prisoners, left for the factory outside. After they had gone, Carran faced Dr. Stone.

"You've won," he said slowly, "but only the first round. When the police get here, you'll tell them my plans. And if, as you say, they don't find you here, I'll be held. But there's another way out for me, that I've planted in case of emergency. This entire factory is mined. Suppose the police arrive to find a heap of rubble with no one alive. They'd never know what we were up to, they'd find your remains in the wreckage and think I died, too. I've a plane, a gyro, on the roof. I can leave, now, with the formula of Timeite, set up another plant in some other country . . . the Canadian backwoods, for instance . . . and start over again. With you out of the way, Mr. Stone, I'll

be the only one who knows the formula of Timeite. And with me supposedly dead in the explosion, there'll be no search. An unsolved mystery of a wrecked factory . . . no more!"

"Good God!" Stone quavered. "You'll murder us . . . all those workmen, in cold blood! You're insane!"

"Depends on the viewpoint," he said grinning. "Anyhow, that's the story. If I didn't get rid of my workmen, they might talk. I've told too many of them what I plan to do. However, it'll be an hour before the police arrive, and by then . . ." Carran touched a hidden spring in the panelling behind him. A dark opening was revealed, in the center of which protruded a small knob. "I've only to pull this knob to set the time-fuse in operation. Fifteen minutes to allow me to get my gyro in the air, and the factory will be a heap of brick-dust. And my next factory will have no phones!" He bent, examined their bonds once more, then turned toward the concealed knob.

"Wait!" Kit's voice made him pause. "Don't you think you'll be lonely in the Canadian woods?"

"Eh?" Carran's gaze swept her slim form. "Lonely?"

"Just that." The girl smiled slowly. "I've no desire to be blown up. Maybe we might make a deal."

"Kit!" Mr. Stone gasped. "Good God, child . . .!"

"So what?" she said fiercely. "I'm no story-book heroine. I want to live! To live! Carran's bound to make himself Master of Time. He'll be the world's richest man! And I . . ."

"You," Carran laughed, "will be the Mistress of Time! Why not?" He crossed the room, cut her bonds. "The gyro holds two. Try any trick stuff and . . ." he tapped the butt of his automatic.

The girl arose stiffly, rubbed her wrists to restore circulation. Mr. Stone seemed broken, old, as though he didn't care what happened now. Pete watched Kit narrowly. Was she playing a game? Or was it only natural, the instinct of self-preservation. She seemed different, somehow, sensuous, hard, sophisticated . . .

"Those ropes hurt my wrists," she was saying. "Got a drink around?"

"Sure." Carran took a bottle and tumbler from his desk. "Here!"

Kit poured a drink of the liquor, swallowed it, shuddering, then, a trifle clumsily, filled the glass for Carran.

"Kit!" Mr. Stone's voice was agonized. "You can't . . ."

"Huh!" Carran downed the whiskey. "She's smarter than you. If you'd chosen to play ball, you wouldn't be here now." Once more he turned to the knob. "All set? Might as well set this fuse going and head for the gyro!"

"In a minute. There's plenty of time." She moved toward a mirror that hung on the office wall. "I look a fright. Let me fix my hair. It won't take a second."

"Right." Carran flung himself into a chair, gun in hand.

PUZZLED, Pete watched. Was she hoping to stall till the police arrived? But that was impossible. Carran would never sit there for an hour, while she killed time . . .

Slowly, deliberately, Kit was taking the pins from her hair, releasing it in a golden torrent about her shoulders. Now she was beginning to plait it again . . . but in the strangest manner Pete had ever seen. One twist of her nimble fingers, then a two-minute wait, motionless. Another twist, and another pause. Ten minutes slipped by and one of the braids was only half done. Pete shot a glance at Carran. The big man was lying back in his chair, chewing at an unlit cigar, his eyes fixed on Kit. No word of warning, no command to hurry up . . . he sat there stolidly, complacently, motionless.

Pete frowned, shot a glance at the dejected Mr. Stone. He was about to speak when he caught Kit's gaze in the mirror, imploring, warning. So she was stalling! But why did Carran permit . . .

There was no sound except the faint drone from the factory outside. Kit moved like an automaton. A twist of her slim fingers, a two-minute pause. Pete watched her lips. She was counting slowly, between each movement. Now one of the yellow braids was complete, and she was starting on a second. Lorelei, he thought . . .

Memory of that hour remained forever stamped on Pete Howell's mind. The pale girl, slowly plaiting her hair, the big, red-faced man lying back in his chair, one hand resting on his gun. Mr. Stone bent, staring at the floor, a second Prometheus, with the vultures of despair tearing at his heart . . . Waiting, breathless, Pete found the interval endless. And still no sound from Carran . . . Minute after minute. A half hour, three-quarters . . . Was Carran mad? The police . . .

THE scream of a siren, the squeal of brakes outside cut through the thick silence. Kit turned from the mirror, drooped, nervously exhausted, against the wall. Carran leaped from the chair, his face twisted with rage.

"The police!" he roared. "So soon! How could they have gotten here . . ." Gripping his automatic,

he ran into the corridor. Shouts, pistol shots, drifted back into the room.

"Dad! Pete!" Kit ran toward them, loosened their bonds. "You're all right?"

"Sure." Pete nodded. "But awfully mixed up. Why on earth did Carran sit there peacefully for a whole hour when he knew the police were on their way?"

Mr. Stone laughed.

"Didn't you understand?" he chuckled. "I did from the start. That's why I played the anguished father. Tell him, Kit!"

"Why . . . there was nothing to it." The girl shrugged. "When we were running through the store-room after we escaped, I figured we had a chance of getting back to Fayetteville in the excitement. And I knew our story of changing time would be laughed at if we didn't have proof. So I snatched this from the shelves." She exhibited a small cardboard box. "Timeite . . . containing both X-1 and X-2. But after Carran caught us here, told us of his plans for blowing up the plant, I thought of another use for it. In that drink I gave him was one of the green capsules, X-1. His mental perceptions were so speeded up that the hour seemed like only a minute or two. Just as that night you spent at our cottage seemed like only a half-hour. I had only to stall around, fixing my hair, for an hour . . . just a couple of minutes to Carran . . . and the police were here."


"Trapped by time!" Pete muttered. "Talk about your irony . . ."

"It was our only chance," she said somberly. "In Carran's hands Timeite would have been a curse to mankind. While in Dad's" . . . she glanced at her father standing in the corridor and explaining to a burly State Trooper . . . "it will be the greatest blessing the world has ever had!"

Pete stared at the girl admiringly. The courage, the beauty of her! He, and everyone in the factory owed her their lives. The kind of a girl he'd always dreamed of. From the corridor he could hear Mr. Stone explaining to the Trooper how the factory had been employed for the making of time. Pete grinned, reached out to take the girl's hand. From the way that she smiled at him he felt he, also, had made a little time.




ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS... Arsenic




IT WAS A COMPOUND OF **ARSENIC** THAT LUCREZIA BORGIA OF 15TH CENTURY ITALY USED TO POISON HER VICTIMS. IN PROCURING THEIR SUPPLY OF ARSENIC, MEDIEVAL ADEPTS IN THE DEADLY ART OF POISONING USUALLY BOUGHT IT OSTENSIBLY TO BE USED AS A COSMETIC. UNTIL WELL INTO THE 17TH CENTURY, PROFESSIONAL POISONERS WERE ALLOWED TO PRACTICE ALMOST OPENLY.

INHABITANTS



OF STYRIA, AUSTRIA, ARE SAID TO HAVE EATEN WHITE ARSENIC DAILY, STARTING EARLY IN LIFE AND BUILDING UP A RESISTANCE TO THE POISON. THE PRACTICE IS REPUTED TO HAVE GIVEN THE PEASANT GIRLS ENVIABLE COMPLEXIONS AND TO HAVE IMPARTED TO MEN AN ABUNDANCE OF ENERGY FOR ARDUOUS MOUNTAIN-CLIMBING. THESE ARSENIC EATERS LIVED LONG LIVES, BUT WHEN THEY DIED, THE ARSENIC CONTENT OF THEIR BODIES FORESTALLED DECOMPOSITION FOR MANY YEARS.

AN ANTIQUE SUNBURN "LOTION"!



AS EARLY AS THE 4TH CENTURY B.C., THE MEN OF ANCIENT GREECE USED ARSENIC SULPHIDE (ORPIMENT) TO PAINT THEIR FACES WHEN SUNBURNT.

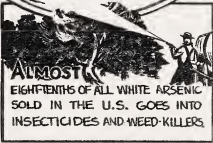


INVALUABLE TO MANY TAXIDERMISTS IS ARSENICAL SOAP USED BY THEM TO PRESERVE SKIN.

ALL DOMESTICALLY PRODUCED CRUDE ARSENIC IS A BYPRODUCT FROM THE SMELTING OF LEAD AND COPPER ORES OR THE ROASTING OF GOLD ORE.



ALMOST



EIGHTENTHS OF ALL WHITE ARSENIC SOLD IN THE U.S. GOES INTO INSECTICIDES AND WEED-KILLERS.

ARSENIC is number 33 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is As and its atomic weight is 74.96. It is a brittle, steel-gray, crystalline solid, having the appearance of a metal. It occurs mostly in the ores, arsenopyrite, or mispickel. It is prepared on a commercial scale by heating arsenopyrite, the air being excluded. It sublimes into

iron tubes, as a brittle, crystalline mass of metallic appearance. Arsenious oxide, or white arsenic, is the most common compound of arsenic, and is used as an insecticide and weed killer, and for preserving skins and furs. It is a powerful poison. Sulfides of arsenic are used as red and yellow pigments. It burns with a bluish flame. Chemically, arsenic closely resembles phosphorus.

CAPTIVES of the VOID

BY

R. R. WINTERBOTHAM

Illustrated by Julian S. Krupa

"GET away! Get away!" John Deno tried to cry out from a throat that could make no sound. The insistent hammering had come again. And the voice. From beyond the horizon of memory Deno heard that voice, and then he was falling again. The frozen hand of fear was on him. "Get away!" he shouted. But had he shouted? There had been no sound. He heard the words only in his mind, heard them because he wanted to say them.

"You're waking up, John Deno!" The voice came to Deno again. In his fever and pain Deno opened his eyes. "Thank the gods, John Deno, you're waking up! Suffer the pangs of a thousand hells as I have suffered! Wake up, John Deno—begin your suffering!"

There were long bony fingers against Deno's throat. Moving fingers, pressing and relaxing, choking Deno back into fitful sleep but never quite allowing the merciful blackness to come again. There was fire in Deno's throat.

"I won't kill you! Death would bring you peace."

After that it was quiet for a time. Slowly Deno awakened. He heard his own tortured breathing, felt the air seeping into scarred lungs. The staring face over him resolved itself into a death's head, covered with skin as waxen and wrinkled as old parchment. In that monstrous head only the eyes seemed to be alive; small lustrous black marbles with an insane streak of red shot through.

"Wake, John Deno. Do you remember me now?" The death's head had moved its lips. The thin mouth opened and a horrible laugh flowed from it.

The creature's words reminded Deno for the first time who he was. The name,

John Deno, had a familiar ring and the waking man knew it was his own. But he still did not know where he was and why he was here. Vaguely he knew what he was—he was a creature of the same race as that living skeleton that wagged a bony finger in front of his face.

As to his location, Deno's senses told him he was in a world of pain. Every movement of a muscle caused him to wince. He suffered agonies when he moved his arms. His fingers felt rotten rags that once had been clothes and which now fell away like dust. There was something smooth and hard as polished stone under his fingers: his own body, cold and lifeless as a fossil. But even then he sensed life racing into its fibres. Each second brought clearer vision, keener senses and recollection of the past.

At first Deno remembered only sleep—ancient and everlasting; sleep that dwarfed the ages of the suns and stars of the universe. He had survived a sleep more profound than death and of greater duration than time.

"Yes, John Deno, we have slept! We have overslept! We meant to dream away ten centuries so we could visit the stars and live to tell of our journey. Instead we have slept billions of years!"

There was no escape for John Deno and Aaron Cleef from their age-old ship, for beyond its hull there was nothing, not even empty space . . .!



John Deno flung the burning cloth into the oozing black cloud

CAPTIVES of the VOID

BY

R. R. WINTERBOTHAM

Illustrated by Julian S. Krupa

"GET away! Get away!" John Deno tried to cry out from a throat that could make no sound. The insistent hammering had come again. And the voice. From beyond the horizon of memory Deno heard that voice, and then he was falling again. The frozen hand of fear was on him. "Get away!" he shouted. But had he shouted? There had been no sound. He heard the words only in his mind, heard them because he wanted to say them.

"You're waking up, John Deno!" The voice came to Deno again. In his fever and pain Deno opened his eyes. "Thank the gods, John Deno, you're waking up! Suffer the pangs of a thousand hells as I have suffered! Wake up, John Deno—begin your suffering!"

There were long bony fingers against Deno's throat. Moving fingers, pressing and relaxing, choking Deno back into fitful sleep but never quite allowing the merciful blackness to come again. There was fire in Deno's throat.

"I won't kill you! Death would bring you peace."

After that it was quiet for a time. Slowly Deno awakened. He heard his own tortured breathing, felt the air seeping into scorched lungs. The staring face over him resolved itself into a death's head, covered with skin as waxen and wrinkled as old parchment. In that monstrous head only the eyes seemed to be alive; small lustrous black marbles with an insane streak of red shot through.

"Wake, John Deno. Do you remember me now?" The death's head had moved its lips. The thin mouth opened and a horrible laugh flowed from it.

The creature's words reminded Deno for the first time who he was. The name,

John Deno, had a familiar ring and the waking man knew it was his own. But he still did not know where he was and why he was here. Vaguely he knew what he was—he was a creature of the same race as that living skeleton that waggled a bony finger in front of his face.

As to his location, Deno's senses told him he was in a world of pain. Every movement of a muscle caused him to wince. He suffered agonies when he moved his arms. His fingers felt rotten rags that once had been clothes and which now fell away like dust. There was something smooth and hard as polished stone under his fingers: his own body, cold and lifeless as a fossil. But even then he sensed life racing into its fibres. Each second brought clearer vision, keener senses and recollection of the past.

At first Deno remembered only sleep—ancient and everlasting; sleep that dwarfed the ages of the suns and stars of the universe. He had survived a sleep more profound than death and of greater duration than time.

"Yes, John Deno, we have slept! We have overslept! We meant to dream away ten centuries so we could visit the stars and live to tell of our journey. Instead we have slept billions of years!"

There was no escape for John Deno and Aaron Cleef from their age-old ship, for beyond its hull there was nothing, not even empty space . . . !



John Deno flung the burning cloth into the oozing black cloud

The words meant nothing to John Deno, for he was still scarcely alive. The thousand pains that racked his body, left no room for curiosity.

"See the radium lamp?" chanted the death's head. "It once contained enough radium to last many billions of years. We traveled at a speed near that of light. Time should have stood almost still, yet the radium is nearly exhausted, although it lost only a few electrons every million years. Ten thousand centuries were only a few seconds in that radium's life, but it has lived ages even on that scale."

John Deno remembered he was a man. The other creature talking to him also was a man—or was he? The men John Deno remembered were lithe and supple. Even the ugliest were handsome compared with the creature he saw.

Memories beat their ways through the vast jungles and trackless wastes of John Deno's brain. He remembered two men being sealed in a small capsule; a ship that would circle the universe while its occupants slept. There had been ceremonies, dedications. He remembered the milling thousands that last day. The music, the leave-taking. . . .

"Do you understand me, John Deno?" the death's head coughed. "We have slept through eternity. Our world is gone. Other worlds like it have perished. Only our insulated capsule, floating in space, remains of galaxies and galaxies!"

The death's head raved on, speaking of meaningless things, of entropy* that had destroyed the universe and the escape of their ship traveling almost with the velocity of light. "It's your fault, Deno!" the death's head cursed. "Your work was too perfect. You made us live too long!"

The dim trails in Deno's memory were becoming highways again. Slowly at first, then in a flood, recollections burst forth in his mind, things of the Earth. He recalled flights from Earth to other planets. He was reminded of glistening, sleek ships which plied the space lanes. They looked like this. This was a space ship!

There were other things redeemed from oblivion. Deno had experimented with a powerful drug which caused suspension of life and preservation of its spark. Bit by bit the framework of Deno's recollections were built, but the details were still missing—lost in an ageless gulf of time.

"ONCE I was your friend, John Deno!" rattled the jaws of the death's head. "But I'm that no longer. You have ruined my life. You've made me a prisoner of a vacant universe. And now you're my prisoner. That's fair enough, isn't it? From now on, Deno, you are my slave. For every pang of loneliness I suffer, you will endure a thousand physical pains."

John Deno struggled to rise from the hard slab on which he lay.

*Entropy, although usually associated with thermodynamics, is more generically the measure of the "running-down" of the universe.—Ed.

"Ah! You are beginning to know me!" the death's head exclaimed. "You remember me? I am the man you once called Aaron Cleef!"

Bits of detail were added to the framework of the past. Deno pieced together what Cleef already had said about a trip to the stars. Now Deno remembered the triumph of successful experiments with the drug and the perfection of an apparatus to apply the antidote at the expiration of a thousand years.

Deno's eyes were clear again. The radium lamp suspended from the ceiling was nearly out. Across the room was a thick pane of glass and beyond it—darkness. The brilliant warmth of stars should be out there in space. Why was there darkness?

Aaron Cleef held a cup of hot liquid to Deno's lips. The fluid seemed to give him strength as he sipped it. He recalled the taste.

"Coffee," Cleef muttered. "The vacuum food containers were intact. Our insulated capsule worked perfectly, except for the antidote mechanism. Better if this ship had not been so well constructed. We would have died with the rest of the universe. Now we live on alone in the universe. Alone in eternity."

Cleef's voice droned on. Again he cursed the apparatus that had failed to awaken him. A trace of moisture in the room had rusted the mechanism. Luckily this same moisture had caused the container to fall apart millions of millions of years later and allowed a few drops of the antidote to fall on Cleef's lips, causing him to awaken.

"I nearly died of starvation before I was able to rise off my slab!" Cleef said, pointing to the place beside Deno where his body had lain. "Something kept me alive. Something gave me the will to live! The instinct for self-preservation—when there is nothing to live for, Deno! But I have something to live for. I wanted to live to awaken you—to watch you suffer as you realized you had slept through eternity. John Deno, I lived for revenge!"

Deno, strengthened by the warm liquid, opened his mouth to utter the first words he had spoken in eternity. The sound of his voice, rattling in his throat, startled him. He made another attempt. With difficulty he formed words. Then he pieced together sentences. Finally, he said:

"It shouldn't be this way, Aaron; we should be friends! True, some fault of mine may have caused the failure of our experiment and I am sorry beyond words. Perhaps I deserve no forgiveness, and yet we both realized we were risking our lives in this experiment. Now, while we are not dead, we might as well be. Since we must spend the rest of our lives together, apparently, hating me will make our condition no better."

Aaron Cleef's face did not soften. It was plain that he was past reasoning and forgiveness. He raised his hand and struck Deno. It was a weak blow, for Cleef's muscles had little strength, but it sent Deno staggering from his slab. He fell weakly in a corner and was unable to rise.

"Not often does a man have the chance to haunt his own murderer!" Cleef's eyes were half-closed, mad-dened beyond endurance by fear.

"Why are you so bitter?" Deno managed to ask.

"Why?" Cleef buried his face in his hands and anger shook his weak body. "Why? My life gone, my work—all for nothing! I was prepared to give up family, home, friends for a purpose. What is there now? You've killed me, Deno—you've killed—" He collapsed into a choked fit of weeping.

"But the same is true of me," Deno faltered.

There was no answer. Cleef was beyond reason. Insanity, the reasonless lust for revenge ruled the shattered fragments of his mind. He was no longer a man but a monster, within and without.

THE process of regaining his faculties was not finished by Deno in a few hours. It took days. In most things, Deno was like a child. He had to learn to use his hands again. At first he was unable to do simple things, such as picking up objects and holding them. At each failure, he was taunted and beaten by Cleef.

Cleef, who had awakened earlier and had regained more of his former strength than Deno, was always ahead in physical and mental development. Cleef's skin no longer was tough and leathery and his hair was growing dark. He had added weight to his body, and took care in allowing Deno only enough food to keep him from starving.

Cleef intended always to be the master, enforcing his commands with blows and kicks. The only time Deno had peace was when Cleef was asleep and then Deno was chained so that no harm could come to Cleef.

Since it was useless to oppose Cleef with strength, Deno tried to persuade him to abandon his tactics.

"It doesn't matter that we failed in our experiment, Cleef," he said. "Other men have died uncomplainingly for science. We are martyrs who never died. Our flight could have been successful had it not been for the fault in the antidote mechanism. We advanced science and knowledge, even in our failure. We should be glad for that, not vindictive."

"Science! Knowledge!" Cleef snarled. "Those words mean nothing now. What do I care for either? I had hoped to return to Earth some day with fame and wealth as a pioneer who completed the first interstellar flight. Now fame and wealth have lost their significance. The only thing left in the universe for me is revenge!"

"You have little to live for, Cleef," Deno said, wearily.

"You have even less!" Cleef angrily hurled a food container at Deno. "Yet you live. The desire to live is instinctive. Self-preservation goes on, even after the end of the universe!"

He broke off with a loud laugh.

John Deno looked at his companion. "Is it revenge, or self-preservation that makes you want to live? If

you were faced with death would you forsake the one thing you have to live for in order to live? That would be an interesting experiment to try—the last experiment to be performed in the universe!"

"It has already been performed," Cleef said. "Each scrap of food I give you brings me closer to starvation. I'm feeding you, bringing my death closer, in order to have my revenge."

Deno did not believe that answered the question. Death by starvation would not come for many months—a year or two at least. Cleef was not actually faced by death as yet.

"Perhaps you can tell me why you want to live?" Cleef asked.

"I have selfish reasons," Deno replied. "Out here, beyond the stars, beyond time, where there is no matter except our little ship, where suffering is all we can expect, there is something that makes me want to live."

"Bah!" Cleef said with a snort. "You think perhaps you will find another world to live on. You live on hopes!"

Deno did not reply. He took his place by the single window of the room to look out into the night of space.

DENO saw only blackness. Even on cloudy nights on Earth there had always been a dim, faint light in the sky. Sometimes human eyes do not realize there is light, but it is there, for some infra-red rays pierce the clouds. Here there was no light of any kind.

Deno never relaxed his vigil at the porthole, trying to pierce the blackness, trying to see something in space. Cleef often interrupted him with curses and blows, but Deno would return.

"It must be pretty out there!" Cleef would shout. "Strange sights, eh? Why don't you keep a log of our trip? A log of nothing!"

Weeks dragged by. Deno's body was covered with wounds from Cleef's inhuman treatment. Still Deno stole his vigils by the porthole, watching, probing the void, until Cleef interrupted.

"Come now, you've loafed there long enough! Make me some coffee!"

Deno moved from the window. From one of the opened vacuum packs he pulled a bag of coffee. He heated water manufactured artificially by the ship's machinery, and in a few minutes he gave a steaming cup to Cleef.

Cleef dumped some of the precious supply of sugar into the cup and stirred as Deno mixed some dried milk powder with water and handed the mixture to Cleef.

The other man dumped the milk into the cup. Deno watched hungrily. Around and around swirled the milk in the cup. It did not mix readily with the coffee.

"Look!" whispered Deno, hoarsely. "It's like a spiral nebula!"

Deno pointed to the figure made by the milk as it swirled unmixed with the coffee.

"You're crazy! Batty as a loon!" Cleef said.

"I'm not crazy," Deno insisted. "Don't you see? The milk in the coffee explains something I've been trying to figure out for days."

"You're nuts."

"Perhaps I am," said Deno, "but these ideas of mine are what keep me alive. It may be hope, as you suggest, and it may be something else. At any rate it isn't revenge and I wouldn't give it up if death stared me in the face!"

"Shut up!" Cleef roared. Then he lowered his voice menacingly. "You want to live because you like to suffer. You're a masochist! I should kill you to put you out of your happiness!"

Cleef forgot his coffee as he rose and advanced toward Deno.

Deno shrank back. "I want to live because I want knowledge," Deno said. "I'm not crazy! To me, knowledge is worth dying for. That's why I was willing to make this trip and that's why I don't complain at its outcome."

"What have you learned?" Cleef taunted, towering over his helpless companion. "That it's dark?" He pointed at the porthole and the blackness outside.

"That coffee gave me an idea, Cleef," Deno went on. "Perhaps we can't see outside because we're in a world of a different kind of matter. Our own kind of matter may have been a kind that was accidentally mixed into the underlying medium of the universe. It swirled around, forming spirals, like cream in black coffee, or like spiral nebula in space, until it was thoroughly mixed."

"And maybe our ship landed on it!" Cleef threw back his head and roared with laughter. "It's ridiculous. Even if a world of another kind of matter existed, we couldn't live on it."

"And why not? Why couldn't our bodies go through an immediate mixing process—"

"You are crazy!" Cleef's hands shot out, seizing Deno by the throat. Deno fought, but his muscles were weak from undernourishment. Blood pounded at Deno's temples. The scene grew dark and his struggles grew weaker.

Suddenly, Cleef's grip released. "Maybe I ought not to kill him," he said. "Maybe it was a gag he thought up to get me to kill him! Maybe he isn't crazy!"

Deno's half conscious body thudded on the floor.

WHEN John Deno opened his eyes, Cleef was standing over him.

"Listen, you!" he said ominously. "How much of the truth have you been telling me? Do you really think there's something . . . maybe a world we can't see . . . out there?" Again he pointed to the porthole.

"There might be. We could find out," Deno said. "If we stepped out of this ship, there might be a sudden transformation that would change our bodies into a new type of matter, without destroying life. We could find out."

"You mean, Deno, we could walk out through the locks?" Cleef was aghast. His eyes automatically traveled to the locks. "What if there's nothing out there?"

"I'll go first, if you wish."

"And leave me here—*alone*?" Cleef's eyes narrowed. "How do I know you're not double-crossing—stepping into space to die so I'll miss my revenge?"

"We can't live much longer. The food won't last."

"But you'd die first and I could watch you suffer. No, we'll both go into the locks. We'll toss something out into space—something we can see—and maybe then we'll know if there's a world out there."

"It might work," Deno said. "Let's go."

Deno drew a little of the liquid fuel from the stove and saturated a rag with it. He wrapped the rag around a board from a fuel container and stepped to the locks. Cleef was at Deno's side.

"Better hang on," Deno warned. "When I open the outer door, there's likely to be a suction, if there's a vacuum outside."

"I'll hang on with one hand," Cleef said, seizing some pipes inside the locks. "But I'm hanging onto you with the other."

Deno felt the pressure of Cleef's fingers on his arm as he lighted the torch.

Holding the blazing stick in one hand, he pulled the lever that opened the outer door with the other. He took a breath as the door swung outward. He stood motionless for a moment, expecting the air to rush from the locks into the darkness beyond.

Nothing happened.

The torch still burned and the air in the locks was motionless and calm.

"There's nothing out there!" Cleef said hoarsely. "Even the vacuum's gone."

Cleef's fingers dug into Deno's arm from fear.

Deno hurled the torch through the door. It sailed to the opening and suddenly went out. They listened for a sound of something striking outside, but they heard nothing.

Cleef's fingers dug further into Deno's arm, causing the latter to wince in pain.

"Look!" Cleef whispered. "*The blackness from the outside—it's coming into the locks!*"

The door that had swung outward already had disappeared, as if covered by a shadow. Just inside the opening the shadow was creeping forward. It was coming into the lock like a square, opaque cloud.*

* The blackness that confronted them was not a material blackness, but merely the absence of all perceptive matter, even to the mysterious ether, within the scale of normal human perception. Beyond that black fog lay a new world, its material vibrations entirely different from those of the world inside the ship. The ship had insulated its contents against entropy, which eventually destroyed all the normal universe, and when contact was made, with the new universe of different matter, the result was a complete cutting off of vision, touch, or any other sense. The apparent appearance of such a world would be a black emptiness, sharply outlined, and confining the ship and its contents. It would perhaps waver as the atmosphere of the ship spread slowly through nothingness and contracted back again, with no space to spread out.—Ed.

It reached toward the men, moving deliberately and slow.

"Close the outside door!" Cleef screamed.

Deno pulled the lever, but the door had gone. The shadow could not be cut off.

Cleef screamed in mortal fear as the shadow came almost within reach of Deno. He turned loose his vise-like grip on Deno's arm and sprang backward toward the inside door of the locks.

In his panic, Cleef fumbled with the mechanism which opened the door. At last it swung inward and Cleef followed, babbling like a maniac.

Deno had not moved. He heard Cleef open the door and tumble in the cabin, but he did not turn. His eyes were intent on the advancing shadow.

"Come in, Deno, quickly or I'll close this door!" Cleef shouted. "It can't get us here—this door is insulated like the rest of the ship!"

Deno still did not turn.

"If it's revenge you want, Cleef, you'd better stay here with me," he said. "Soon we'll be separated."

The shadow was only a foot from his face. Already he could feel its utter absence of heat. There was an instant of awful panic, a sudden urge to turn and seek safety inside the ship.

Safety from what? Surely anything was preferable to becoming Cleef's slave again.

The instinct of self-preservation, the fear of the unknown, tugged at him, begged him to flee.

The shadow was an inch from him now.

The cabin door slammed behind Deno. Cleef had forsaken his only reason for living—revenge—in order to protect his life. Self-preservation was a senseless thing after all. Cleef would die alone—

The shadow touched Deno. It was cold beyond sensation. In an instant it had enveloped Deno like a suffocating cloud, running through the fibres of his skin, chilling him to the bone. His senses whirled in a kaleidoscopic mist, which grew gradually lighter until full sunlight burst into his eyes.

The light came through a funnel in which his body

seemed to whirl.

Suddenly the cloud and blackness vanished and he stood in a lighted valley. In the distance were mountains of odd geometrical shapes, plants of waving brilliant colors. There were billowing white clouds in the sky, sunlight and warmth around him.

There were sights he saw that he had forgotten from the days when he lived on earth. Some of them he had never seen before and he could not describe. Once more John Deno was a babe, learning new sensations, experiencing new things, but this time the learning was without pain.

He looked back, hoping to glimpse the black cloud and the space ship. Even as he turned, he knew that the capsule belonged to another kind of matter, as invisible in this universe as energy was to the old.

On the ground beside him was what looked like the door of a spaceship—it was the outer lock of the capsule. A short distance beyond was a piece of board with a rag around the end—the torch Deno had hurled through the door. Both objects were unchanged and Deno knew that he was unchanged in appearance, although the matter in his body probably was radically different from the matter in the world that had vanished.

He saw something move in the distance. It was a procession of creatures advancing toward him. As Deno watched he saw that they were men. They wore skins of beasts instead of clothes. They were primitive, but they were intelligent and friendly, for they smiled as they advanced toward Deno, who raised his hand in a friendly greeting.

John Deno felt alive again. He would live with men, be one of them. The universe was beginning all over again.

For an instant Deno's thoughts returned to Cleef, the last survivor of a dead universe, living alone in the capsule, thinking that only death lay beyond the doors of the locks. What sort of an instinct was it that made man cling, cling, cling to something that no longer existed?

WOMEN KNOW WHY THIS FREE OFFER WORKS!



Lambert Pharmaceutical Co., Dept. 119, St. Louis, Mo. Please send me free and postpaid your large sample tube of ☐ Listerine Shaving Cream; ☐ Listerine Shaveless Cream. (Check whichever is desired.)

CLIP THE COUPON

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ State _____



JULIAN
KRUPA
ID 39

HELL in EDEN

BY RICHARD O. LEWIS

OUT of the red mists and waving fronds it came. Great, bat-shaped birds swooped awkwardly away, went wheeling and croaking through the red haze as the lizard-like creature advanced.

A feeling of dread coursed through me as it stopped abruptly before me and stood there on heavy legs, its tooth-studded jaws dripping saliva, its glowing green eyes staring directly into mine.

I turned quickly to Mel Heyden who had slumped wearily into a chair by the controls after his first hasty greetings to me. "Where in the world did you get such a brute?" I gasped.

The red light, filtering in through the thick glass that separated us from the misty cavern, in no way softened the haggard lines in Mel Heyden's face or the deep circles that were beneath his eyes telling of fatigue.

He smiled up at me, wearily. "I created it."

"You what!" I exclaimed aghast.

Then I remembered. Even in college, Mel had been possessed with some devilish idea of creating life. He had spent most of his time reading literature that dealt with the past and studying various types of light rays. Chance had thrown us together as roommates and, due to his retiring mode of life, I was about the only friend he had.

"Yes," said Mel. "I created it from pure energy."

I looked again through the glass partition that shut off the tunnel-like opening between Mel's laboratory and the great cavern beneath the mountain.

The lizard, well over six feet in length, was still standing there, its green eyes boring fixedly into mine. It was the first time I had even seen a beast that could stare directly and unflinchingly into the eyes of a man. In fact, the thing seemed actually determined upon staring me down.

"You remember," Mel was saying. "I told you

MEL HEYDEN created an artificial Eden where evolution went through all its odd stages. But he didn't bargain on another snake, and another Eve.



I swung my club at the lashing head of the monster as it clutched Mel and Eve in its coils

HELL in EDEN



JULIAN
KRUPA
1939

BY RICHARD O. LEWIS

OUT of the red mists and waving fronds it came. Great, bat-shaped birds swooped awkwardly away, went wheeling and croaking through the red haze as the lizard-like creature advanced.

A feeling of dread coursed through me as it stopped abruptly before me and stood there on heavy legs, its tooth-studded jaws dripping saliva, its glowing green eyes staring directly into mine.

I turned quickly to Mel Heyden who had slumped wearily into a chair by the controls after his first hasty greetings to me. "Where in the world did you get such a brute?" I gasped.

The red light, filtering in through the thick glass that separated us from the misty cavern, in no way softened the haggard lines in Mel Heyden's face or the deep circles that were beneath his eyes telling of fatigue.

He smiled up at me, wearily. "I created it."

"You what!" I exclaimed aghast.

Then I remembered. Even in college, Mel had been possessed with some devilish idea of creating life. He had spent most of his time reading literature that dealt with the past and studying various types of light rays. Chance had thrown us together as roommates and, due to his retiring mode of life, I was about the only friend he had.

"Yes," said Mel. "I created it from pure energy."

I looked again through the glass partition that shut off the tunnel-like opening between Mel's laboratory and the great cavern beneath the mountain.

The lizard, well over six feet in length, was still standing there, its green eyes boring fixedly into mine. It was the first time I had even seen a beast that could stare directly and unflinchingly into the eyes of a man. In fact, the thing seemed actually determined upon staring me down.

"You remember," Mel was saying. "I told you

MEL HEYDEN created an artificial Eden where evolution went through all its odd stages. But he didn't bargain on another snake, and another Eve.



I swung my club at the lashing head of the monster as it clutched Mel and Eve in its coils

once at college of my belief that the sun had created all life in the very beginning. Certain energy-rays, showering down upon the earth from the youthful sun, were directly responsible for all known life. As the sun aged, those energy-rays went through a gradual change which caused all life to evolve.

"I duplicated the energy-rays that must have come from the sun at the beginning of time and created in this cavern every species of life known to the earth."

Mel paused to pass a trembling hand over his pale forehead. He seemed on the verge of complete exhaustion. "The energy-rays being sent down from the lights in the roof of the cavern are changing much faster than did the rays from the sun," he continued. "From behind this glass partition, I have been able to observe life evolve from mere pin-points of energy into the Reptilian stage you now see."

I wasn't listening to Mel as he told about harnessing the stream beneath the mountain for electrical power and recounted to me his lonely defeats and victories. For some reason, I was sitting there staring dumbly at a cluster of fronds just beyond the glass. I wanted to turn my head away, but couldn't. Two tiny eyes seemed to blink out before my concentrated gaze.

I shook my head. Nonsense. There wasn't anything there. Drops of moisture, perhaps, formed from the red mist and reflecting chance rays of light.

I looked at Mel. No wonder he seemed at the point of utter exhaustion. No man could stand up under the constant strain of work and loneliness that had evidently been his lot.

I decided right there that, evolution in the cavern or no evolution, I was going to take Mel back to town with me for a rest if I had to drag him away by force.

A MOVEMENT of the lizard attracted my attention. The monstrosity seemed to have grown much shorter and sturdier than when I had last noticed it. It was moving restlessly about upon legs that had grown thicker. Its scale-covered hide was changing, too. Even as I watched, several of the scales loosened and dropped to the ferns.

Mel, too, saw the change. "Look!" he cried, his hollow eyes lighting with excitement. "The scales are beginning to shed! We are about to witness the passing of the Reptilian stage!"

He clutched up a note-book and began writing hurriedly.

Beyond the glass, the whole landscape changed. The glow of light became a pale orange color, the trees took on a more woody appearance and the lesser, fern-like vegetation was fast becoming reedy of stem. A bird flew by displaying rudimentary feathers which, I guessed, was now a necessary protection for its body against the increasing amount of ultra-violet in the energy rays.

Mel's pencil fell from his fingers as he slumped down into his chair. The orange light in no way hid the unhealthy pallor of his face. He seemed about to fall to the floor.

I was at his side in an instant. "Mel," I said decisively, after he had recovered some, "you've got to quit this work here. It's getting you down. This loneliness is doing something to your soul, distorting it from its normal order, forcing you to go beyond your endurance."

Mel sat staring dazedly into the green eyes of the thing that had once been a lizard.

"I'm taking you away with me," I continued. "I'm going to take you back to civilization for a long rest. You need sleep, regular meals, companionship." And—I thought to myself—a good wife to look after you!

His sunken eyes were still upon those of the beast. "I'm not really alone here, Dick," he said, finally. "She . . . it has come to keep me company every day since it was just a . . . well, just a squirming . . ." He seemed unable to find a word that would describe what the staring brute had been at the beginning.

"And some day," I stated grimly, "it will come right through that glass and fasten its teeth into your throat. Then the rest of the pet demons you have cooped up in there will follow at his heels and the good people of Maine will awaken some fine morning to find devils clawing at their windows."

Mel straightened in his chair and shook his head. "That can't happen, Dick," he said. "The life I have created in there is still in the remote past. If taken out of there and placed in the world of today, it couldn't possibly exist over twenty-four hours."

"And, as an added precaution, I have this." He turned to indicate a small button among the controls that were upon the wall near his hand. "One touch of this button will drop a thick sheet of steel between the laboratory and the cavern, a sheet of steel that will seal the entrance for all time."

"Just the same," I said determinedly, "I am going to take you away with me. You can't continue on here with only a . . . a . . ." I looked at the beast that had once been a lizard and had now changed into something I could not name. ". . . with only a nameless monstrosity to keep you company. You need rest and I am going to see that you get it."

HE was silent for so long that I thought he had accepted my dictum. Then I saw that he hadn't even been listening to me. He was sitting there staring fixedly through the glass. I followed his gaze to a dense clump of reeds. Again, I had the feeling that two beady eyes had been there and blinked out.

"Mel!" He seemed to be in a trance. I shook him by the shoulder. "Mel," I said again. "What in the world is wrong here?"

He turned toward me, and I could see his eyes slowly returning to reality. His body was trembling as if from weakness and a shadow of uncertainty clouded his face.

"Dick," he said, finally, "I may as well be frank with you. I wrote to you asking you to come here because I was afraid, afraid of something within the cavern."

"Nonsense," I said. "There is nothing to be afraid of as long as you can close the entrance by a touch of your finger."

"Several times during the last two weeks, I have awakened here in my chair to find that I had been in a kind of hypnotic trance. During those times, I have felt that something was prying into my mind, searching out my very thoughts."

"Merely an overworked mind seeking rest by resorting to periods of momentary amnesia."

He shook his head. "No, Dick. There is something strange in there! I am certain of that!"

"Two nights ago, I set the controls to zero so that no evolutionary change could take place within the cavern during my absence. Then I went into the hunting lodge to get some sleep. When I returned here, the small door leading into the cavern was open. *Something had come through that door and had set the controls for full change.*"

My hand was still upon his shoulder. I felt sorry for him. The strain of his work had his nerves keyed up to such a high pitch that he could find no complete rest. His sub-conscious mind had probably induced him to walk in his sleep two nights ago, had caused him to turn on the controls without his conscious mind's knowing anything about it.

"Since then," Mel continued, "I have kept these two rifles by my side constantly." He indicated two powerful weapons leaning against the wall within easy reach. "They contain hollow-pointed bullets filled with a quick-acting poison. With you here to help me, it will be an easy matter now to guard that door."

"But why have the door there at all?" I asked. "Why not seal it up?"

Mel looked searchingly through the glass. "Sometimes it is necessary for me to go into the cavern," he explained. "In the past history of the earth, many voracious species evolved. They could not kill off the lesser species because there was room for the lesser ones to escape. But here in the confines of the cavern it is different. A giant species could evolve and, within a single night, wipe out completely every trace of the lesser . . ."

He broke off abruptly.

As if his very words had borne fruit, the strange landscape burst into sudden animation.

HUNDREDS of half-feathered birds swirled in confusion through the misty air. The reedy growth rattled as small animals went scurrying for shelter. Several odd shapes were dashing through a shallow stream toward the waiting protection of caves in the jumbled rock along one side of the cavern.

The brute with the green eyes cringed against the glass. Its scales had vanished entirely now and its tail had withered to nothingness. Rudimentary hair had made its appearance over the shortened body.

After its first terrified moment, it went lumbering away, squat and awkward on its thick hind legs. A short distance from the glass, it stopped beneath a tree,

grasped a low branch and, in much the same manner as a great ape, swung itself up into the foliage.

Mel had leaped from his chair. "Something is wrong!" he shouted.

In spite of his apparent weakness, he moved hurriedly. One hand reached the rheostat knob on the control board and pulled it to zero. His other hand clutched up one of the rifles. Before I could stop him, he threw open the small door near one side of the glass and rushed through.

I grabbed the second rifle and followed him. I stopped to close the door behind me. No need of leaving open the gates of hell.

Hot, damp air and strange, fetid odors bit at my nostrils. Roars, screams and rasping croaks smote against my ears. From some distance away came heavy thumping sounds mingled with hideous terrified shrieks.

I saw Mel brushing madly through the reeds toward a low ridge that hid from view the greater portion of the cavern. The greatest bedlam seemed to be coming from that direction. He stumbled over the ridge and was lost from my sight.

The tall reeds clawed my face and hands and tugged at my clothing as I sought to follow. A fleeing animal about the size of a boar dashed suddenly between my legs and sent me sprawling headlong into the weeds. I got hastily to my feet, wiped the perspiration from my burning eyes and spat sand from my mouth.

Reaching the top of the ridge, I halted abruptly at the sight that met my eyes.

Below me stretched a wide, shallow valley with a small clump of trees near its center. Among those trees, their heads towering almost to the tops of them, were several gigantic, furry shapes. At first glance, they resembled giant kangaroos. Later, I saw the difference. Their short forelegs ended in thick, curved claws and their wide, flat jaws were tooth-studded.

Their great hind legs and thick tails made loud thumping sounds against the ground as they reared high to claw at something in the tops of the swaying trees. Ape-like forms came hurtling down from the branches to be clutched up in huge, slaving jaws. I could hear the crunch of bones above the awful shrieks of the victims.

And there was Mel!

He seemed a diminutive form among the reeds as he went racing toward the feeding monsters, waving his arms and shouting at them like an insane man.

"Mel!" I shouted. "Mel! Stop! Use your gun!"

THE confusion within the cavern drowned my voice.

He couldn't hear me, and I knew I could never catch up with him in time to save him from his doom.

In desperation, I leveled my rifle at his legs. It seemed like a good idea at the time. I had to stop him some way!

Then I remembered the quick poison that was in the hollow points.

One of the monsters caught sight of Mel, wheeled

about and came charging at him with claws extended and jaws dripping red.

I took a hurried aim at the evil head, squeezed the trigger. The roaring echo from the vaulted roof of the cavern nearly shattered my ears.

I saw the head jerk back violently as the heavy bullet crashed into the beast's neck. Blood gushed from the opened jaws as the hollow point tore the throat out. But it didn't stop him.

My second bullet found the center of the furry belly. The brute staggered a moment as the poison took effect. Then, towering directly above Mel, he came crashing down, his shoulder striking Mel a glancing blow that sent him sprawling.

Mel got slowly to his feet, his left arm dangling limply at his side. The shock seemed to have returned him to sanity, for he knelt down again quickly and raised his rifle to his shoulder with his right arm. Another of the giant beasts was charging him. He brought it down with a quick shot that must have torn the creature's heart out.

My rifle joined Mel's in the firing, and the four remaining monsters died in the midst of their orgy.

Mel was swaying on his feet as I reached his side. He seemed to pay little attention to his injured arm. He was looking searchingly into the trees where the apes had been.

"They're gone," he said despairingly. "Every last one of them wiped out. They were to be the most important part of my experiment."

"There is still your friend in the tree back by the glass," I told him.

"Yes," he said. "I was just thinking of her. She is the last of the species. We must see that nothing happens to her."

That was the second time he had used the feminine gender in referring to the creature, and both times there had been a certain note of reverence in his voice.

"Just what kind of monsters are these?" I asked.

"This species has no name," he said. "It is unknown to the history of evolution."

"You mean this thing never existed upon the earth in the past?"

He nodded. "That's right. Billions and billions of species began life upon the earth in the very beginning, but only a small per cent withstood the rigors of those first few years. Here in the cavern it is different."

"Then there could be others—other unnameable monsters . . ."

"Yes. But there is no cause for alarm. I have extra clips for the rifles."

In spite of his reassurance, I felt the alarm within me mount suddenly higher. What if something *had* come into Mel's laboratory while he slept! What if something *had* been watching me, studying me from that fern cluster outside the glass!

"For heaven's sake, Mel," I said, "let's get out of here!" I stooped to pick up my rifle.

It is impossible to describe the chill of dread that

shot down my spine as I paused half bent over. I had placed the rifle on the grass to inspect Mel's injured arm. The imprint of the weapon was still there. *But the rifle, itself, had disappeared!*

It was then that I saw the reptilian head, beady, intelligent eyes staring directly into mine, lash out of the reeds toward me.

"Mel!" I shouted. "Your rifle! Quick!"

I struggled against the hypnotic gaze of those eyes, tried to move, tried to run away as heavy, living serpentine coils whipped about my body and pinned my arms to my sides.

I caught sight of Mel as I fell heavily to the ground. He, too, was surrounded by reptilian shapes.

There on the ground, I began to fight with every ounce of strength within me. I tried to free my arms, tried to throw off the coils that encircled me. They tightened suddenly and I felt the air rush out of me from beneath my aching ribs. A feeling of terror rushed through my tortured brain as I felt myself being plunged into swirling blackness.

I OPENED my eyes to find that I was lying upon a cold, stone floor. I moved my body tentatively. There seemed to be no bones broken, but there was a heavy pain in my chest and my arms ached.

Mel was lying at my side. I shook him by the shoulder until he opened his eyes. "Are you all right?" I asked.

He sat up slowly and shook his head for a moment as if to clear it. "Where are we?"

I looked about. "As near as I can tell," I said, "we are in a small cave at one side of the cavern, and the entrance to the cave is barricaded with crossed poles bound together by thongs."

Together, we crawled across the stone floor to the barricaded mouth of the cave and looked out. There, stretched out across the entrance and basking in the light from the energy-rays, was our guard. Its thin, serpentine body was fully twelve feet in length.

It raised its head at our approach and came slithering toward us. For a hideous moment its eyes looked squarely into mine and I felt my mind go blank. Evidently satisfied that there was no immediate malice lurking within my thoughts, it shifted its gaze to Mel.

The ugly head was near enough that I could have reached out through the bars and touched it. There was a wide hood back of the head and around the edges of the hood protruded several strong tentacles. Like the asp family, it had no external ears. Its slim, forked tongue kept darting out as if to pick up sound vibrations.

Evidently satisfied with its findings in Mel's mind, it slid back to resume its basking upon the rocks.

The shallow brook flowed just below us. Beyond that, grassy vegetation and trees arose to form a solid bank of green.

Mel clutched my arm as a shape broke through the wall of vegetation to come lumbering toward us. I recognized it immediately as the ape-thing that had

once been a lizard. There was no mistaking those great green eyes even at that distance.

But it had changed. Its body was now covered with a shaggy coat of brown hair and its arms had lengthened until they nearly touched the ground as it waddled slowly toward us.

Mel's fingers tightened upon my arm. "Good God!" he whispered. His thin face had gone suddenly pale and tense.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Why . . . why it has been evolving!" He fairly gasped out the words.

"Yes," I said. "I can see that. But . . ."

"Don't you see, Dick?" He turned to face me, and I could see the horror that was within his eyes. "Don't you remember? I set the controls to zero so that there would be no evolutionary change while we were in here. Now . . ."

A cold sweat broke out upon my forehead. "You mean, you mean those things, those damn snakes, have gone into the laboratory and tampered with the controls?"

"That's the only answer, Dick! Remember, I told you of my experience of a few nights ago? I told you how I had awakened to find the controls had been tampered with? They did it. Now, with us cooped up in here, there is nothing to stop them. They will keep the controls set for a full rate of change."

"But, why?" I asked. "Why do they want their own evolution speeded up?"

"They are intelligent," said Mel. "And, like the monsters we were forced to exterminate, they are unknown to the history of the earth's evolution. They are accidents, and their possession of intelligence is equally accidental. But that intelligence, coupled with the reptile's inherent power to fascinate . . ." he paused in horror. "Their purpose is obvious."

I was struck dumb by the hideousness of the situation. I pictured those loathsome creatures breeding and multiplying in the hills of Maine, spreading through the country, striking terror to the hearts of innocent people. And here, helplessly cooped up in a small cave, were Mel and I—the only two who could possibly avert the catastrophe.

THE ape had approached to a point just beyond our lone guard who, still basking in the light, seemed to pay little attention to the beast's actions. It squatted there, its long arms dangling at its sides so that its knuckles rested lightly upon the ground. It was staring at Mel with its strange, green eyes, watching his every move. Mel was staring back.

I fumbled in my pocket for my knife, found it and whipped open its blade. "I am going to get out of here," I said.

There was no doubt in my mind but that I could break down the barrier with my shoulder, but the noise of it would certainly arouse the guard. I remembered the strength of the coils that had once been about me. There had to be another way.

I began sawing away with my knife at a thong that bound one of the bars. The thong fell away in my hands and I laid it softly upon the floor of the cave. Then I went to the next one. It, too, gave way beneath the blade of my knife.

One end of the cross pole was still bound to an upright, but the other end, the free end, was in my hands. I let it down silently. That left an opening more than large enough to crawl through.

My whole body was trembling as I slid slowly through the opening and stopped in a crouched position on the other side. I measured the distance carefully. One, two steps. I slid one foot forward.

My eyes were fastened upon a spot in the creature's neck just back of the head. That was the place. A quick, downward thrust there, a twist of the blade . . .

I don't know what caused it, whether it was a slight sound made by my foot upon the rocks or whether it was my concentrated gaze upon the back of the creature's neck, but, at that moment, the reptile's head reared high and wheeled suddenly about to stare at me. A sibilant shriek of alarm hissed out from its throat.

It was too late to turn back. I lowered my eyes from its fascinating gaze, centered my attention upon a spot in its hissing throat, raised my knife high and charged.

Something hit my upraised arm a powerful blow that shot pain through my shoulder muscles and spun me half way around. The next instant, a heavy coil was about my body. My knife went clattering to the rocks as I was hurled back bodily into the cave through the entrance I had made.

For a moment, I lay there half stunned while the hideous head peered at me through the bars, its tongue flicking in and out.

Mel helped me to a sitting position.

"Your ape friend could have been of some help just then," I told him.

"She knew better," said Mel. "Look!"

I saw them coming then, the whole horde of them. They came slithering over the rocks, their heads raised high.

The leader of the pack must have been at least sixteen feet in length. Its head with its cobra-like hood and swaying tentacles towered a foot above the others.

A short distance away they paused. I could smell the reptilian stench of their bodies. It was nauseating even to a stomach that had been long empty.

Then I felt the force of their gaze upon me. It seemed as if a dozen magnets were concentrating upon me. I tried to shut my eyes, tried to concentrate upon something, anything. Then I was sitting there helplessly, staring into lidless orbs that were deep and soulless.

Scenes and events from early childhood were flashing through my mind. Things I had long forgotten became stark and vivid. As if through the eyes of another, I saw myself going headlong through the whole gamut of my life.

Every nerve in my body seemed to be cracking beneath the strain of the awful ordeal. Just before unconsciousness claimed me, I was again explaining the principles of psychology and was surprised to learn just how much I knew about the subject.

I MUST have slept the long sleep of exhaustion, for, when I opened my eyes, I had the feeling that ages had slid past. The pale yellow glow that had pervaded the cavern was gone. A bluish-white light like that of normal sunlight had taken its place.

Mel was standing by the repaired bars looking out. There was something unnatural and tense about the way he stood there.

I got to my feet, went to his side and placed a hand upon his shoulder. "Mel! What is it?"

Then I saw the thing that held his gaze!

"Good God, Mel!" I gasped.

The landscape was no longer weird or fantastic. There were trees now, normal trees with gaily colored birds among their branches. Flowers and shrubs grew in profusion and the grass was no longer reedy of stem. It was of verdant green that gave way to thick moss along the bank of the stream.

And there upon the mossy bank, half seated, half reclining back on her elbows, was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen. Her oval face was framed in wild, golden hair that fell about her shapely shoulders in gushing splendor. Her body of pale bronze was perfectly curved and quite innocent of any outer adornment.

She reclined there with the complete abandonment of a fawn, one hand toying with a red rose, her large green eyes gazing into Mel's.

"Good God!" I gasped once more. "How did *she* get in here?"

Mel turned slowly to look at me. It was the first time I had ever seen both pain and joy written upon a man's face at the same instant.

"She . . . the ape!" He was having difficulty with his words. "The last of her species. It . . . she evolved!"

My startled eyes swept back to her. This beautiful creature, the ape—the green-eyed lizard I saw when I first stepped into the laboratory? It was incredible!

The lovely creature was reclining at full length now. One knee was flexed. Her other bronzed limb extended down over the mossy bank to permit her foot to taste the cool water of the brook. Her full, red lips were mimicking the song of a gaily-colored bird that was constructing a nest in a low branch near her.

"Just like the first woman must have been," breathed Mel. "Just like Eve in the Garden of Eden!"

Our lone guard came slithering across the brook toward us, obviously alert at our renewed actions. It, too, had changed. Its head and eyes had grown much larger, its body longer but slimmer. The sight of it brought back to me the horror of our own situation.

"Yes," I said in quick disgust. "Eve and her pet snake!"

Then a thought struck me. The girl! She would be intelligent! The reptiles paid little attention to her! If we could talk with her, instruct her . . . Perhaps she could find the rifles for us, get us a weapon of some kind to fight our way out.

AS if the girl divined my thoughts, she arose at that moment from her moss couch and began picking her way daintily across the brook.

She was even more beautiful as she approached. But I could find nothing within my mind to compare her beauty. Such wild, untamed . . . She was enough to arouse the basic animal instincts of a wooden Indian. I could picture wild, hairy men fighting savagely with clubs to gain her slightest favor.

She paused just beyond the snake that had taken up its usual business of basking on the rocks beneath the light-rays.

"Speak to her, Mel," I urged. "See if you can make her understand that we are prisoners here."

He seemed incapable of speech. He just stood there.

"You've got to do something!" I said. "Speak to her! Tell her we need help!"

"Hello," said Mel, finally.

She looked up at him quickly. Her red lips parted in a friendly smile.

"Hello," Mel repeated inanely, like a silly schoolboy speaking to a girl for the first time.

"Ungh?" she questioned.

I must have gone half mad then. I grasped the bars with both hands. "Listen!" I shouted. "Can't you see! Can't you see we are being held here! We need help!"

Evidently she took my shouting to mean that I didn't desire her presence, for, after one startled look at me, she fled across the brook and disappeared into the thick vegetation.

"You shouldn't have frightened her," accused Mel. "She is intelligent, but she has never had the opportunity to converse with one of her own species. She doesn't understand."

"Look, Mel," I said, patiently. "Do you see that snake out there? We've got to kill it in some way! We've got to get out of here before it is too late!"

"At the rate things are evolving now, it will be only an hour or so before those monstrosities get to the place where it will be safe for them to go out of the cavern. Obviously, the next step is for them to exterminate us!"

Again, I considered breaking down the barrier and making a last fight. And, again, I decided against it. I wouldn't stand a chance. The reptile beyond the bars had to be silenced in some way so it would be unable to give the alarm. But how?

"Mel," I asked. "Don't you have a knife in your pocket? Something, anything, I could use for a weapon?"

He began fumbling through his pockets. He pulled out a few matches, the two extra clips for the lost rifles

and some other odds and ends. But I didn't wait to see what the odds and ends were. I grasped the two extra clips.

"They are no good without the rifles," said Mel.

I was examining the hollow points carefully. They had been sealed over with a thin layer of wax.

"What kind of poison is in here?" I asked.

"Cyanide of potassium."

I sat down upon the floor of the cave and took the bullets carefully from the clips. My fingers trembled as I split a matchstick to the proper size and dug the wax cap out of the first hollow point.

Mel must have guessed my plan. He bent over me eagerly. "Be careful," he warned. "A little of that on your hands, working into the pores, might . . ."

"I know," I said. "I've studied chemistry."

I FOUND a withered leaf that had fallen into the cave from one of the poles in the barricade. I smoothed it out upon the rocks and let the poison fall upon it as I picked at the hollow points. In a few moments, there was a small mound of the deadly white powder.

I placed the leaf carefully in the palm of my hand and got to my feet.

"You go first," I told Mel. "Rattle the bars as if you are trying to get out. Get the devil's attention. I'll be at your side ready."

Mel did as he was told; he began pounding at the bars, clawing at one of the thongs. I was behind him and a little to one side. My cupped palm was extended before me, waiting.

The reptile came slithering toward us almost instantly, its head reared high, its tongue flicking. Mel continued his work until the head thrust itself through the bars directly in front of him.

I could see into the awful depths of those eyes as they bored into Mel's, held him transfixed. I took a step forward, my whole body tensed for quick action.

My action must have attracted the thing's attention. One moment, I had been stalking my prey, ready for the kill; the very next instant, I stood there rooted to the floor of the cave, unable to move.

Those hideous eyes were boring into mine, holding me rigid and helpless. My hand was not over a foot beneath the evil head. With every ounce of energy within me, I tried to force my body to do as I willed. Cold perspiration beaded out upon my forehead. I knew I was licked, licked with freedom in my very hand.

Then I was conscious of Mel's swift move. I felt his fist hit my hand a sharp blow from beneath. I saw my hand leap upward into the creature's face, saw the white powder go billowing out.

The next instant Mel shoved me to one side. But even as I went stumbling backward I saw the forked tongue licking out into the smoky puff of cyanide.

The eyes blinked suddenly shut and the tongue disappeared. The head jerked back and the mouth opened to give a scream of alarm. But no more than

a feeble hiss came from those gaping jaws. The serpent went coiling and tumbling backward down the incline toward the brook.

"Good boy, Mel!" I shouted. "Let's go!"

I played football in college, but I never struck the line of scrimmage even half as hard as I hit that barricade with my hunched shoulders. I went smashing through to land sprawling upon the rocks outside. Mel took the opening I had made like a veteran full-back.

"Don't stop," I said. "I'll be right with you."

I scrambled to my feet and clutched up the first semblance of a weapon I contacted. It was a broken pole about six feet long and several inches in diameter.

Mel splashed across the stream. He paused at the other side to see if I were coming, then disappeared into the bushes.

I caught up with him in a small glade. He was standing there holding Eve with one hand and making frantic gestures with the other in the direction of the laboratory.

"Cut the Indian signs," I shouted. "Get going! They'll be after us in a minute!"

My hoarse shouts, the overgrown club in my hands and the wild look upon my face as I came crashing out of the brush were enough to frighten anything. Eve cast one terrified glance at me then grasped Mel by the arm and started running.

AS she jerked Mel headlong into the bushes, I thanked heaven that she was headed in the right direction. I followed.

A hissing scream reached my ears from behind.

I zigzagged through the bushes, struggling to keep my sense of direction. The screams grew louder behind me.

I broke cover to see a narrow, grassy plain stretching before me to the open door of the laboratory. Eve and Mel were part way across the plain. The hard run was telling upon Mel; he was beginning to lag behind. But Eve, glancing backward at me, urged him on.

I began to breathe easier. Success looked certain now. And, once within the laboratory . . .

Then I saw the huge, reptilian head that reared itself up out of the grass before the door. Eve and Mel were rushing blindly toward it.

I doubled my own efforts to reach them, began shouting at them; but Eve merely increased her speed.

The head was not over ten feet ahead of them. It was raised high and weaving back and forth as if getting ready to strike. This serpent that guarded the door was going to take no chances on any hypnotic tricks. It knew that Mel and I had passed our usefulness to the hoard. It intended to kill as quickly as possible.

I shouted again as the head struck downward.

Eve must have seen the darting head at that moment. She flung herself to one side and jerked Mel after her. But too late. I saw Mel fall beneath the impact.

Then everything was in confusion. The grass ahead of me writhed with the struggling bodies of the serpent, Eve and Mel. From behind me came hissing screams as the pursuing devils sought to close in upon me. I charged ahead shouting madly.

Eve was trying to extricate Mel from the serpent's coils. The serpent was towering above them, head poised to strike. My wild shouts attracted its attention at that moment and it whirled quickly to meet me.

I felt the force of those eyes, saw the blur of the arched neck as the head started down. Shutting my eyes tightly, I swung the club with every ounce of power my body possessed. I felt it thud against a yielding body, heard a deathly reptilian scream. I opened my eyes.

Eve had Mel half way into the laboratory. I shoved him the rest of the way through, flung the door shut and bolted it against the slithering mob at my back.

Mel was lying upon the floor breathing heavily, the side and front of his torn shirt oozing blood.

I bent over him. As I did so, something leaped upon my back and began clawing at me. It was Eve. She was still of the opinion that I meant to do Mel harm.

I grabbed her wrists before she could claw my eyes out and pulled her around facing me. "You young wildcat!" I panted. "Can't you understand anything! Can't you see I'm trying to help him!"

IT may have been the way I held her wrists, or the way I looked at her, I don't know. Anyway, she calmed down and permitted me to get Mel into a chair.

I tore away his shirt and found a long gash upon his shoulder where the serpent's head had struck a glancing blow. He opened his eyes.

"Are you all right?" I asked.

He didn't answer. His eyes found Eve's and he sat there staring at her.

"I guess you are," I decided. "I'll get some water and clean out that cut."

Both water and bandages were to be had in the hunting lodge. I picked up a shirt and a pair of trousers on my way back.

Mel was still sitting in the chair, still staring at Eve. There was a smile of idiotic rapture upon his face.

She was standing with her back to the glass. I didn't look past her through the glass for fear of something that might meet my eyes there. But who could look past her anyway! With the rays at her back highlighting her bronzed body and her golden hair, she was breathtaking in her beauty.

"Here," I said, tossing the clothes to her. "Put these on—if you can."

"I had her stand there so the rays could reach her through the glass," Mel explained. "She hasn't evolved quite up to the present, and I didn't want to chance anything happening to her."

I washed Mel's shoulder, bandaged it and improvised a sling for his arm.

"You are all in," I told him. "You are going to take a nice long rest in bed while I stay here in the labora-

tory and send these snakes to the very end of evolution. It's the only way to get rid of them."

Mel nodded. "The end is probably not far away. Their brains will continue to grow, but their bodies will deteriorate until they are unable to search for food."

Then he looked through the glass. "But I hate to spoil such beauty," he said. "There is a real paradise! There a man could have lived on and on in peace with his own thoughts!"

I too looked through the glass. There wasn't a snake in sight. They were probably lurking somewhere in the grass oblivious of the end to which the light-rays were taking them. The place, with its flowers and birds, was beautiful—except for the trick of nature that had caused the serpent-evolution. Mel was right. The place could have been a veritable paradise!

I placed an arm about Mel and helped him to his feet. Eve was struggling with the trousers. Mel went to her and placed the trousers right side up in her hands. She smiled at him, her large green eyes glowing, and he smiled back, leaving Eve to struggle with her trousers.

I WAS preparing a place for Mel on the couch when the first sound reached my ear. It was a small, grating sound, almost inaudible. A premonition of danger stiffened me. The sound came again. It was louder this time.

"Something is wrong!" I shouted as I raced across the room. I flung open the door of the laboratory and rushed in—too late.

Eve's shirt was still lying upon the floor by the glass. But Eve, herself, was gone. The half-open door by the side of the glass partition gave the answer. Eve had entered the cavern!

I leaped to the glass and peered through. I saw her then. She was walking stiffly across the glade dragging the trousers listlessly behind her. A huge reptilian head was before her, its eyes boring into hers, leading her on.

The clever devils had wasted no time. As soon as Mel and I had quitted the laboratory they had forced their power upon her, forced her to open the door and enter the cavern.

Mel was standing at my back. The excitement of the moment had lent him strength. He took in the situation at a glance, leaped to the controls and pulled the rheostat knob to zero.

So that was it! That was why they had enticed Eve into the cavern! They must have guessed our intentions of sending them to the end of evolution. They knew we could never do it now, not as long as they had Eve with them.

Angry color had mounted to Mel's thin face. Madness flashed from his eyes as he rushed toward the cavern door.

I caught him just in time, fought with him and dragged him back into the laboratory.

"You can't do it, Mel!" I shouted at him. "It would be suicide! You couldn't help her! You wouldn't

stand a chance! For God's sake, think of yourself!"

He continued to fight against me until the last spark of energy went from his body. I felt him relax and saw sanity return to his eyes.

"There is a better way," I continued. "There must be a better way. I'll go for help; get men and guns."

Even as I spoke, I knew the plan was no good. I couldn't leave Mel alone in the laboratory. And I couldn't take him with me for fear the serpents might break down the glass in our absence.

I thought of the sheet of steel Mel had once mentioned. No. That would seal Eve into the cavern for all time.

"Listen, Mel," I said shaking him. "What about guns? Aren't there more guns in the lodge? Shot-guns?"

He seemed incapable of answering. He just sat there staring through the glass at the fringe of brush behind which Eve had disappeared.

I remembered the gun-room of the hunting lodge. I had visited the lodge once before the death of Mel's father. There had been guns then, all kinds of them. With shotguns, we would stand a chance!

I shook Mel again. "Wait here," I said. "I'm going after the shotguns. I'll be right back. Then we'll blast them out of there."

I hurried into the main room of the lodge, turned right and went through another door into a small room that had once contained racks of guns and fishing tackle.

A quick glance showed me that the room had been changed. The racks were upon the walls, *but they were empty!*

Mel had evidently disposed of the things after the death of his father. There were a few boxes and other odds and ends about the room. I began searching frantically among them. Perhaps he had overlooked something. There *had* to be a weapon here!

My groping fingers came in contact with an oily cylinder some ten inches in length. I read the label hurriedly: "Trinite!" Mel had used the explosive in blasting away certain obstructions in the cavern!

I clutched the cylinder eagerly in my hand. This might do the trick! Now to find fuse and detonators!

Then, quite suddenly, my stomach turned over nauseatingly and my knees went to water. Mel! I had left him there staring into the glass! What if . . .

Clutching the stick of trinite to me, I ran from the room, abject fear dogging my every step.

Reaching the door of the laboratory, I flung it open. Mel's chair was empty! The door to the cavern stood open!

Even as I dashed across the room, I cursed myself for being a fool. I shouldn't have left Mel sitting there alone staring into the glass!

"Mel!" I yelled as I raced through the door into the cavern. "Mel! Come back!"

I could see him walking stiffly into the fringe of brush on the other side of the glade. "Mel!" I shouted again in desperation. "Mel!"

He didn't hear me.

Then, even as I found myself gazing fixedly into those bottomless orbs that had appeared suddenly before me, I realized my own mistake. I had run heedlessly into the cavern!

That had been their plan! They had counted on us running into the cavern to rescue Eve! Mel had obviously been lured in, but I had stumbled blindly into their trap.

I tried to fight those eyes that bored into mine, tried to tear my own gaze away from them. But I was helpless. I was walking stiffly across the glade away from the door. An awful blankness was creeping into my brain, shutting out all else.

I FOUND myself standing alone at the edge of the brush through which both Mel and Eve had been led. But something was wrong. There were no hideous eyes looking into mine, nothing forcing me ahead. Rational thought returned to me and I wheeled quickly about.

I saw them then! The serpents!

The door to the laboratory stood open and they were slithering through the grass toward it. Nothing could stop them from reaching it.

Cold fear coursed through my body. Once through that door, they would set the controls for a full rate of evolutionary change. Then they would drop the sheet of steel, close the entrance. The three of us—Eve, Mel and I—would be imprisoned; the energy-rays above would send us hurtling along to the certain doom of evolution's end.

Uncontrollable madness laid hold of me as I sensed their dastardly plan. Blood hammered my temples as I flung myself after them. I wanted to clutch them in my hands, tear them apart.

They had scrambled through the door and were closing it behind them. I could see one of them reaching for the rheostat knob with the tentacles that fringed its hood.

A moment more and it would be too late.

Then I remembered the stick of trinite still clutched tightly in my right hand. Without pausing in my mad run, I hurled the oily stick at the glass partition with all the mad strength in my arm.

Even as the stick left my hand, I heard a shout behind me and knew it was Mel.

The entrance to the cavern exploded into sudden white light. A ghastly, echoing roar crashed against my ears. Bits of glass and stone showered about me and a terrific blast of wind hurled me to the ground.

I was on my feet again in an instant, running. Acrid gases stabbed into my aching lungs. The roaring in my ears grew louder and nearer. Huge rocks began to tumble about me.

Through thin wisps of smoke and dust, I saw the fission of the rocks above the entrance, saw them splitting and breaking up into parts and come tumbling down toward me. The ground thudded and quaked directly behind me as a last mad leap carried me

through the entrance and into the comparative safety of the laboratory.

Gases, smoke and dust burned my gasping lungs. I turned about and caught sight of Eve and Mel. Hand in hand, they were drawing back from the shattering entrance. One instant, I saw them, then they were blotted from view as an avalanche of stone showered down from somewhere above to block the entrance before me.

Something shot out of the dim laboratory to grasp me. Coils sought to encircle my legs and body. My clawing fingers contacted an enormous head. I began twisting the head, trying to force it away from me. Then we were rolling about on the blasted floor of the laboratory.

My hands lost their hold and came sliding down the evil body. I found then that it was bloody, half torn in two. Stumbling to my feet, I grasped the ghostly, struggling thing and hurled it from me.

There came a sputter of green light as the thing crashed against the control board and went careening to one side. A gigantic something that began in a dull roar and ended in a grinding crash smashed down beside me. In the dim light, I saw that it was the thick sheet of steel. The contact of the serpent's body against the controls had released it.

A hideous, oversized head protruded from beneath the steel. The eyes were open and staring, but they were dead.

I staggered over to the controls. Eve and Mel were safe in the cavern. Their enemies were splattered about the laboratory. But the rheostat was still on full force causing everything within the cavern to evolve.

My fingers searched for the knob. It was gone, blasted away. I knew another frantic moment, then I picked up a chair from the floor and crashed it into the control board. I continued smashing away until the chair splintered in my hands and the controls lay battered at my feet.

There could be no evolutionary change within the cavern now. Everything would remain the same. The birds would continue to sing, the flowers would blossom, and there would be peace. The steel door had slammed shut, and that way I would leave it be, at least for awhile. The door had been made by men and men would be able to open it again. But it would wait. There was a Paradise beyond the door, and in it . . .

And it made me laugh to think about it, weary as I was. There in Paradise was Eve who had never seen a man before. With her was Mel, who had never mingled with the opposite sex. Then, of course, there were the trousers that Eve had taken with her. . . .

Well, maybe it wasn't really funny. Maybe it was just the way nerves that have been stretched too tight find relaxation. But somehow, as I walked slowly toward the main room of the hunting lodge, for some reason I felt lonelier than ever before in my life. . . .

ON A FROSTY MORNING - WATCH YOUR BREATH TRAVEL

ONIONS
DENTAL DECAY
TOBACCO
LIQUOR
UPSET STOMACH

BAD BREATH TRAVELS AS FAR

DON'T OFFEND...USE SEN-SEN

BREATH SWEETENER...DELIGHTFUL CONFECTION

SEN-SEN
FOR THE BREATH

5c

THROAT EASE
VALUABLE TO
SINGERS AND SPEAKERS

FANTASTIC HOAXES

(Continued from page 29)

ing preparations for a major experiment of their own—not connected with Society funds—and felt discouraged that in their own country someone else had taken the glory away from them without even informing them.

But soon negative evidence began to pile up that made them feel better. The editor of the London newspaper that had started the whole thing, when approached, replied that his information had been "accidentally obtained from a thoroughly reliable source." If he had been so very certain he would probably have reacted somewhat differently. A search of our files revealed that there was no member of the German Rocket Society by the name of Fischer (—which was a bit strange, to be true, since Fischer is a fairly common name—) and that nobody by that name had ever been in touch with the Society at all. Since at that time practically everybody interested in rocket research had contacted the Society at one time or another it made the existence of a rocket enthusiast by that name still more doubtful. One of my foreign correspondents at that time wrote that Ernest Loebell of the Cleveland Rocket Society had traced the story and had found it correct. I at once wrote to Loebell with whom I kept a fairly steady correspondence and immediately received the reply that he "had never bothered even thinking about so silly a story."

It is almost unnecessary to add that an interrogation of all those people that would have known about the flight if it had taken place as described failed to bring any results. In fact, many of them had not so much as heard the story which at that time had not yet made its entry into the German press where, by the way, it was confined to a few small provincial newspapers. None of all the people we questioned would have had any reason to keep the truth from our knowledge. If there had been truth in the report.

In addition to all that there was internal evidence against the truthfulness of the story. The island of Rügen in the Baltic, impressive with high white chalk cliffs and dense green forests, is fairly large and deservedly famous as a sea shore resort. But it certainly does not deserve special newspaper correspondents. Not even the large German papers maintain correspondents on Rügen. I do not see why English newspapers should do it.

As to technical details the steel construction of the rocket is a dubious point. All the rockets I know of were built wholly or at least partly of aluminum and aluminum alloys and since the strength of the light alloys is sufficient there certainly is no need to substitute steel. That "Otto Fischer" should have spoken of an altimeter needle quivering around 32,000 feet is a severe mistake on the part of the "special correspondent." Meters of all kinds built anywhere in Europe (if not England) are calibrated in meters and kilometers. The same applies to the "asbestos floor." It so happens that the most frequently used insulating materials in Germany are slag-wool or glass-wool, not asbestos. Last but by no means least the description of the ascent is pure fantasy. The correspondent described (probably without really knowing what he said) a rocket propelled not by continuous combustion but by a number of separate explosions. It so happens that continuous combustion, which is advantageous in every respect, is much easier to achieve. And even if continuous combustion were more difficult any inventor would go to any required length to produce it if a passenger carrying rocket were to be built, especially if the own brother is going to be the pilot.

Just to be thorough I might also add that there never occurred a rocket explosion on Rügen which killed an inventor. The only martyr of rocketry at that time was Max Valier whose untimely death occurred in a suburb of Berlin.

About two years after all that the Fischer Hoax was revived again by an article "Space Explorers" by one Mr. W. J. Makin in Nash's Pall Mall Magazine (London, May issue 1935). In that article Mr. Makin wrote that he had visited the proving grounds of the German Rocket Society where Herr Otto Fischer was introduced to him. "Even as I shook hands with him," Mr. Makin wrote, "I realized that I was meeting the one man who had traveled through space inside a rocket and lived to tell the tale—the first passenger to enclose himself in a steel rocket of some twenty-four feet, which was shot six miles into the air . . ."

Here it is stated that Otto Fischer could be found on the proving grounds just as it is stated that I could be found there. Strange that I never met him, nor Mr. Makin for that matter. Later in the same article it is implied—although not actually stated—that the famous Rügen rocket was built on those proving grounds. Strange that I never saw it. And it is very unfortunate that the proving grounds were abandoned and the buildings closed about five weeks after Otto Fischer's alleged flight. Just when did Mr. Makin find them open to meet Otto Fischer after his flight? . . .

I think, however, that I know what furnished the raw material for the Fischer Hoax. The model for the one inventor who was killed during an experiment is doubtlessly Max Valier. And the model for the rocket flight is probably a plan actually entertained at that time by the chief engineer of the proving grounds. As I said, the "news" broke just at the time when he was preparing for a major flight. He had been approached by some people connected with the administration of the city of Magdeburg, a medium sized town about 100 miles from Berlin. The result of the various meetings had been that Mr. Rudolf Nebel, the chief engineer at the proving grounds, had promised to try and build a rocket capable of carrying one passenger to an altitude of about one kilometer (3300 feet). At the peak of the flight the passenger was to jump free from the rocket by parachute. After the design of the rocket had been finished several models of fairly large size (weighing approximately 250 pounds) were built and tested. The day scheduled for the flight was a Sunday seven weeks after Easter, 1933, which date was



"You've got Venus beat a mile.
What good is a girl without arms?"

marked on a souvenir postcard issued by somebody in Magdeburg. That souvenir postcard showed the rocket in flight but naturally it was only a drawing, not a photograph. In fact the passenger carrying rocket was never completed and only a model of it (larger than the test models but much too small to carry the weight of a man) made a flight around the day scheduled from a patch of farm land at Wolmirstedt near Magdeburg. It seems that the correspondent of the London newspaper utilized some of the preliminary reports to concoct a sensational story, using fictitious names and a different locality. And unfortunately his "report" was received with much more enthusiasm than he had dared to hope for.

But—unfortunately also—not a word of it was true. The only thing that really exists is the island of Rügen itself, with white chalk cliffs, green forests and a host of ancient legends. So many, in fact, that there was no need for a modern legend which was to cause untold annoyance.



The GIFT OF MAGIC

By MILES SHELTON



Montgomery threw his knife with deadly aim

JIM MONTGOMERY grabbed the ragged Hindu guide by the wrist and pushed him back against the stone basement wall.

"No you don't!" he growled. "I may be an American tourist but I wasn't born yesterday. I gave you a ten spot to lead me to the Wizard. Now you try to tell me the tunnel has disappeared. What makes you think you can pull this on me? Find the way and find it quick!"

The Hindu gulped and shuddered as Montgomery shook him. Then his face smoothed into an oily smile.

"Perhaps, if we try again, perhaps we'll find the right door this time, *perhaps*."

"That's better!" said Montgomery. "*Perhaps*."

The guide slipped along the dark, shadowy maze of corridors walled with crumbling mud bricks. Montgomery caught glimpses here and there, through breaks in the musty ceiling, of the countless winding alleys of Calcutta and patches of brilliant tropical skies above.

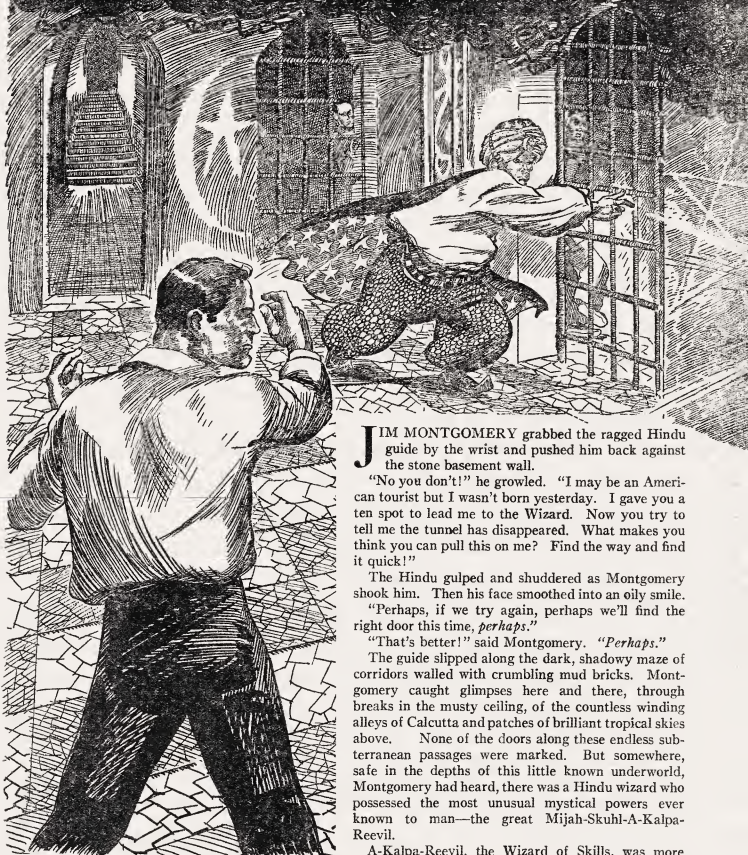
None of the doors along these endless subterranean passages were marked. But somewhere, safe in the depths of this little known underworld, Montgomery had heard, there was a Hindu wizard who possessed the most unusual mystical powers ever known to man—the great Mijah-Skuhl-A-Kalpa-Reevil.

A-Kalpa-Reevil, the Wizard of Skills, was more



ONCE the skill of knife throwing went astray, the Wizard was no longer master of his palace of magic.

The GIFT OF MAGIC



Montgomery threw his knife with deadly aim

JIM MONTGOMERY grabbed the ragged Hindu guide by the wrist and pushed him back against the stone basement wall.

"No you don't!" he growled. "I may be an American tourist but I wasn't born yesterday. I gave you a ten spot to lead me to the Wizard. Now you try to tell me the tunnel has disappeared. What makes you think you can pull this on me? Find the way and find it quick!"

The Hindu gulped and shuddered as Montgomery shook him. Then his face smoothed into an oily smile.

"Perhaps, if we try again, perhaps we'll find the right door this time, *perhaps*."

"That's better!" said Montgomery. "*Perhaps*."

The guide slipped along the dark, shadowy maze of corridors walled with crumbling mud bricks. Montgomery caught glimpses here and there, through breaks in the musty ceiling, of the countless winding alleys of Calcutta and patches of brilliant tropical skies above.

None of the doors along these endless subterranean passages were marked. But somewhere, safe in the depths of this little known underworld, Montgomery had heard, there was a Hindu wizard who possessed the most unusual mystical powers ever known to man—the great Mijah-Skuhl-A-Kalpa-Reevil.

A-Kalpa-Reevil, the Wizard of Skills, was more

By **MILES SHELTON**



ONCE the skill of knife throwing went astray, the Wizard was no longer master of his palace of magic.

legend than reality to most who had heard of him. As for Montgomery, he only knew that such a wizard existed, and that if half the tales of his marvelous powers were true, even that was beyond belief. Montgomery's business, however, was not concerned with supposed magic. The whispering underground of the criminal world had seeped information through to the American consular offices. Information about the disappearance of an American girl. That meant work for Montgomery. He was the consul's investigator.

The scheming face of the Hindu glanced back at his follower. The tunnel was growing darker. Montgomery was sure they hadn't come this way before.

Directly, the Hindu tottered and fell, as if exhaustion had overcome him. Then he looked up with an agonized expression calculated to wring pity from an American tourist.

"What's up now?"

"I grow faint from hunger," the guide wailed. "I have nothing to eat. I am so poor."

Montgomery laughed. "Same old game. All right —" He opened his billfold. The Hindu leaped to his feet and extended his eager brown hands. "Here's five and that's the last. Now find that Wizard before I take it out of your hide."

"Yes, my most honored, wise and good master. At last I have managed to find his door. Here —"

He motioned to a dark, overhanging triple archway in the crumbling wall. A patch of weak purple light from a glass in the sidewalk to one side provided barely enough illumination to reveal the door of upright planks. A smooth polished spot that glistened darkly around the latch gave evidence that many seekers had found their way to the legendary sanctum of A-Kalpa-Reevil in years past.

The guide crouched at the keyhole. "The Wizard is in," he said.

A chill shot through Montgomery. "Can you see him?"

"No. Only a candle burns in his reception room, for a sign that he is willing to receive guests. But the guest must know how to get entrance."

Montgomery knocked.

"That is not the way," said the guide. "The Wizard's porter is deaf. The only way is to put one's lips to the keyhole and blow the candle out. That may attract his attention."

MONTGOMERY bent to the keyhole. A short red candle burned dimly just beyond the door. So the porter was deaf. Strange that the Wizard didn't restore his hearing to him, if there was any truth in the legends of his remarkable powers.

Jim Montgomery looked up. The Hindu was retreating stealthily down the corridor. A careful look back, and he had slipped around a corner and was gone.

The smell of candle smoke came through the keyhole, mingled with the weak fragrance of an exotic oriental incense.

He put his lips near the opening and blew. The slender flame beyond the door flickered. He repeated his effort. On the third puff, the beam fluttered out.

Minutes of silent waiting in the near darkness. Only the slightest of sounds. The traffic of the city sent down faint rumblings, almost inaudible. Something moved near Montgomery's feet. A toad. Livid under the blur of purple, it plodded past the door.

At last a metallic clank of an iron lock, followed by the grinding of hinges. Slowly the door opened upon the blackness and Montgomery walked toward it.

CHAPTER II

A Giant Punchboard

THE early afternoon sun played on the open court of the sunken flowered garden at the center of A-Kalpa-Reevil's tiny kingdom. Buried in a crowded section of the great city, and walled in by a triangular block of buildings that provided an impassable barrier, the little kingdom was a world unto itself. A world of mystery and of evil.

The Wizard's tightly-bound turban of purple silk sat high on his head, and jeweled stars shot brilliant points of reflected light across the magic wall before which he stood.

A-Kalpa-Reevil's flashing jewels caught the eye of the girl who stood behind the bars of a triangular window that looked upon the Wizard's Court of Magic. With more venom than usual, he slapped his hands together for an attendant.

The servant entered on the instant. A-Kalpa-Reevil pointed to an opening in the crimson and silver tiled magic wall, a wall that was constructed like a huge punchboard. Then he jerked his thumb toward an object on the floor. One of the Wizard's gifts had fallen out of its place in the punchboard-wall for no apparent reason.

The attendant knelt, picked up the triangular silver case and returned it to its socket. Instantly, it seemingly jumped out and dropped to the thick oriental carpet. Quietly, the servant replaced it; again the silver object sprang from the magic wall and fell to the floor.

A-Kalpa-Reevil tossed his high turban backward, slithered his brown fingers downward through the air. His eyes rolled toward the Heavens, and from his thin lips came the sibilant muttering of incantations.

Soon he finished and he clapped his hands twice; two more attendants appeared.

"The knife-thrower must be dead." His voice, as he spoke, sounded ancient and unused. There was a rasp in it, a faint grating sound.

"His skill has returned to its niche and crowded out my substitute." He juggled the silver case in his hands. "Therefore he must be dead. Go take him out of his cell and bury him."

The three Indians salaamed and went on their mission. . . .

Ruth Marigold shuddered. So the knife-thrower had died at last. Perhaps he had longed for death. At least now there would be no more lashings from the guards for him. She wondered who the next unfortunate would be to fall into the Wizard's clutches by choosing one of the skills he prized.

That had been her own ill fate. A year ago she had come here like any other innocent tourist, curious to try A-Kalpa-Reevil's wonderful game of chance. She had chosen a niche in the great magic punchboard that was apparently only a harmless tiled wall with many holes for silver cases.

She had drawn a blank—and discovered that the blanks were the Wizard's rarest prizes. And from that moment on she possessed an uncanny ability. She could see the light of mental activity.*

Strange sensation! In her eyes every person wore a halo of light around his head, a halo which by the intensity of its light revealed the power and capacity of his brain.

The Wizard's head fairly glowed with luminosity. She always knew when he was coming, and it was the terror of her life that he frequently slipped about in the dead of night and sometimes paused before her prison window, unmindful that she saw the evil gleaming in his face.

IT was a most curious insight. She could read human beings at a glance. To her amazement, as she watched the Wizard's customers come and go, she discovered that differences in stature or handsomeness were as nothing compared to the tremendous differences in their "brain lights."

But the very moment she had won this strange gift had been a moment of tragedy. The shrewd Wizard was inflamed to discover she had chosen one of his rarest prizes, a talent that he himself would never possess. But the Wizard had a method of keeping his most prized magic gifts at his own command. He trapped the prize takers and locked them in a private prison system. And his prisons were full.

Ruth lived in a cell that was a study in oriental luxury. Her triangular window was within full view of the magic wall. Unwelcome as it was, she witnessed all the tragedies and comedies of the chance visitors who came for mystic prizes.

When there were no guests, she could entertain herself by watching the attendants come and go. Most of them were dullards, with brain-lights almost too dim to be seen. It amused her that such witless persons strutted about in impressive silk costumes of brown and yellow stripes and thought themselves very im-

*This gift of magic isn't so fantastic as it sounds. Scientists have reached the conclusion that thought is electrical in nature, and that in the process of thinking, some form of electrical energy is utilized. Any form of energy gives off radiations. Thus, it is theoretically possible that these radiations might be made visible to eyes attuned to their wavelength in the scale of vibration. When Ruth Marigold selected her "gift," it is most likely that she was subjected to certain radio-active emanations contained in the silver case which affected her sight to such a degree that she was enabled to see the radiations of energy thrown off by the more powerful brains.—Ed.

portant. She never ceased to marvel at the fact that scarcely anyone had enough brain-light to compare with A-Kalpa-Reevil.

"Whose brain was brighter?" the Wizard always asked her, after every new customer had left.

"Yours, by far, Excellency," she always answered, and if he suspected a false note in her voice, he quizzed her upon the degree of difference, for he was more jealous of his brain than anything—even his reputation.

Ruth kept two secrets from her oppressor, however, that she never expected to reveal. One was that each time the Wizard grew extremely jealous of the brain-lights of others, his own brain-light would twinkle through many colors and seem to diminish a little.

The other was that the fat little Ethiopian porter who answered the candle in the reception room had a brain illumination that actually outshone the Wizard's. He was a quiet, odd-looking little creature that the Wizard never wasted a thought on, and neither would Ruth have, except for this strange revelation. Only that light would shine like a galaxy of stars in darkness. It seemed that the little man had his thoughts.

...

Now, as the Wizard tossed the spare silver capsule into a transparent urn, where he kept the overabundance of minor, unimportant skills—such as card tricks and smoke-ring blowing—the fat little porter waddled in.

"A guest, Excellency."

The Wizard read the card the porter handed him.

"Hm-m—Montgomery," he muttered. "An American, no doubt."

He motioned the porter to bring the guest in.

Soon a well-dressed young American of athletic build emerged into the brilliant Court of Magic. For a moment he blinked his eyes, as if the sudden light blinded him. Then he saw the somehow regal, commanding figure of A-Kalpa-Reevil standing by the magic wall with folded arms.

"The Wizard of Skills, I believe," said Montgomery.

The Wizard tilted his jeweled turban disdainfully, and points of colored light jumped across the American's face.

Montgomery grinned. "We aren't on speaking terms, perhaps?"

THE Wizard's eyes flashed anger. "It is customary," A-Kalpa-Reevil's voice rasped, "for guests to kneel at my feet when they come into my presence."

"Yeah?"

"Yes," said the Wizard icily. "They do so as a gesture of respect."

"They must be nuts," said Montgomery. "Why should they show respect to your feet? You're no tap dancer, you're a wizard. It's your head they ought to respect. I'll just bow."

Grinning broadly, he nodded without taking his eyes off the mystical figure.

A-Kalpa-Reevil said nothing. He motioned the

newcomer to sit down, and slowly made his way across the Court of Magic.

Jim Montgomery welcomed a chance to study his surroundings. The magic wall was an object to fascinate anyone. At first he saw it as a panel of crimson tile, studded with silver figures: stars, squares, triangles, hearts, crescents—hundreds of them. Then he noticed the punchboard effect of an occasional empty socket where the silver capsule had been removed.

This he realized was the Wizard's game of chance—a glorified, incomprehensible punchboard of treasures. Montgomery's sporting blood warmed to the sight. He was here on business, but he was not sorry that his business would cross paths with the magic wall.

Glancing about to see what had happened to his infamous host, Montgomery saw something that made him half rise from his chair. A-Kalpa-Reevil was talking through the bars of a triangular window to a girl whose obviously Western features were as startling as her beauty.

Tempted almost into leaping across the courtyard at once, Montgomery got a grip on himself and sauntered easily in her direction, though inwardly he was on fire. And then he knew. Unquestionably here was the lost Marigold girl, still alive and even more beautiful than her pictures in the papers.

Another glance and he was caught between vexation and doubt. The lovely, confiding expression on the girl's face as she whispered through the bars to the Wizard seemed more eloquent than words.

"What a blundering idiot I am!" Jim Montgomery said to himself. "She's in love with the old boy. She's stuck here with him from choice. Look at her smile at him. Hell! I've got no business here."

He whirled about and walked back across the court, determined to make a quick exit. Again the magic wall was before him. He hesitated, stopped. The sight intrigued him.

Out of his hearing, the girl continued to whisper to the Wizard of Skills.

"But I assure you, your Excellency, there is no comparison. Your brain is shining brighter than ever today, while his light is too faint to be noticed. I only wish you could see for yourself. Have no anxieties, your Excellency."

RUTH saw the rainbow glow disappear from the subtle illumination surrounding the Wizard's head. He believed her; and believing her, he could have no jealousy.

The Wizard strode back to Montgomery arrogantly, and the girl sank quietly to a chair. It had been close, all right. Had she dared tell the truth, the great A-Kalpa-Reevil might have been plunged into a murderous rage. Weakly Ruth rose again to the window to watch the interplay of brains as the Wizard explained the mysteries of the magic wall.

"Stored in the pockets of this honey-combed wall," the Wizard was saying, and there was a note of pride in his thin voice, "are many wonderful skills, inherited

from past ages. The world's finest card tricks are here; also sleight-of-hand art that would make any magician proud. Here are also the talents of the juggler, the agility of acrobats and the strength of strong men. Any one may be chosen by a man of good fortune."

"I s'pose the more cash I lay on the table, the luckier I'll be," Montgomery cracked.

"It is solely a game of chance. If you are so fortunate, you may strike upon the rarest of gifts, such as prophecy, or mind reading, or curing afflictions by the touch of the hand."

Montgomery smiled. "Hardly my style," he said. "But maybe you've got one that'll guarantee me the quickest draw with a revolver when I need it."

The Wizard of Skills smiled condescendingly. "That gift is in service at present. It will return to its niche in the wall only when its present owner dies. But there are many others equally attractive."

Montgomery opened his billfold. "What are the damages?"

The Wizard's narrow eyes pierced the American's bankroll, then turned upward. His long brown hands rose into the air and slithered downward, his fingers weaving dramatically. After what Montgomery took to be an impressive consultation with invisible powers he answered.

"One hundred American dollars."

Montgomery closed his billfold, turned on his heel with a sarcastic "Glad I met you," and started for the door.

Five brilliantly uniformed attendants blocked the way. The Wizard's voice came over his shoulder.

"The world's finest skills—to the lucky man."

"This isn't my lucky day," Montgomery retorted without looking back. "I blundered into this joint on a screwy hunch, and I better blunder out again, now that I see everything's—"

Involuntarily he glanced at the triangular window. The girl was there as before, but now she was gripping the bars tensely. There was a different story in her face, an unmistakable appeal that went straight to the American.

He squared around abruptly to face the haughty Wizard.

"A hundred smackers? Brother, it's a deal!"

Montgomery peeled the amount off in a single bill before his host should get his breath and raise the price. Then without an instant's hesitation he swung a hand to the magic wall and pointed.

"This one!"

THE great A-Kalpa-Reevil looked to Montgomery's hand, expecting to see him draw forth a silver capsule of playing cards or juggler's balls; the usual thing.

From her window Ruth saw the Wizard's fingers suddenly go tense. His brain-light wavered and for an instant it was tinged with blue. Then the girl saw the reason for the Wizard's suppressed flash of emotion. For the American's hand rested upon the open niche

that held the invisible skill of knife-throwing.*

CHAPTER III

Prison Bars

JIM MONTGOMERY'S sole purpose in turning about and trying his luck was to stall for time until he could pull his wits together. Ruth Marigold had him worried. Whether she was prisoner or accomplice, she oughtn't to be here.

He felt a tingling sensation spread through him, sensed a vague urge to throw something. He was filled somehow with a strange confidence that he could hurl a missile with deadly accuracy.

The Wizard unwound a few more slithery motions with his hands and ended with a grand wave at the young American.

"The gods of luck have smiled upon you," he said with a restrained bow. "I pronounce you the world's most accurate knife-thrower."

Montgomery returned the bow, though his eyebrows stayed up. "Knife-thrower, huh?" he said. "Not quite as hot a skill as beating the other fellow to the draw, in my country. But as long as that skill's out—By the way, when the gunman dies off, I might come back and trade my knife-throwing in on a new line."

"I have no power to make changes. Each person retains his one skill until death. Then it returns to this wall."

"Okay." Montgomery grinned. "Got a knife? I'm sort of curious to see how this thing works."

The Wizard clapped his hands and an attendant entered, bearing a dozen knives on a tray. They were beautiful steel blades with handles ornamented in silver and studded with semi-precious jewels. They gleamed almost as evilly as the Wizard's narrow eyes, Montgomery thought.

A-Kalpa-Reevil must be up to something. His poorly-controlled anger of a moment before had given way to an incredible smile, and he spoke now with an air of finality.

"My servants will attend you. You will find a target at the other end of the garden, and you may practice your new skill as long as you wish. Good day."

Under his breath Montgomery said, "I'll bet he means 'good night!'"

His suspicions grew as the attendants took him in charge. He didn't like their overstuffed, gaudy uniforms of brown and yellow silk stripes. The men re-

minded him uncomfortably of overgrown bugs.

They escorted him across the perfumed sunken garden toward an arcade where a circular target appeared. At a chalk line twenty paces from it they halted.

Montgomery took a knife from the tray and weighed it in his hand. A thrill of pleasure shot through him at the confident feeling in his arm.

On each side of him four attendants waited expectantly. A ninth held the tray for him as the tenth man strolled idly toward a pillar at the front of the arcade. The fellow's hand slipped carelessly down the back of the pillar and came to rest.

"A trap," thought Montgomery. "A hidden lever."

He noticed the target was well back within the open arch. Several other arches of the arcade were closed with iron bars, behind which prisoners languished.

It was plain as day. The Wizard expected Montgomery to be overwhelmed by his first bull's-eye. When the American rushed enthusiastically through the pillars to examine the target—

A flip of the wrist and the first blade flashed through the air. *Plunk!* It stabbed the target.

THE ten onlookers stared, motionless.

"Bull's-eye?" came the croaking query of the Wizard from across the garden.

One of the attendants ran to him and gasped.

"Your Excellency, he missed the center of the target by two feet!"

The Wizard's eyes closed; his hands were tightly clenched.

Another attendant rushed up a moment later. "The second knife missed, your Excellency, as far as the first!"

To Ruth Marigold's eyes the Wizard's brain-light turned to a purplish fog. His hands went up to twist the air overhead as he muttered weird incantations.

"The skill is slow to take effect," he declared to his attendants. "But don't let that deter you from your purpose. Obey my orders!"

They scurried back to marvel with the others at the knife-thrower's poor marksmanship. One after another, the knives missed by never less than two feet.

The bewildered Wizard saw it all from his point of vantage.

"If I didn't know he was a simpleton, I would suspect a trick," he growled to himself.

Angrily the Wizard turned to the magic wall, looked at the triangular socket. He stepped over to the urn of cheap skills and picked up a triangular capsule. It fitted into the magic wall perfectly—and *stayed there!* That proved the knife-throwing skill was gone.

The American must have received it, then. A-Kalpa-Reevil scowled and his brain-light blazed purple.

When the twelfth knife cut the air to join eleven others in a perfect arc some two feet to the right of the target, the ten unforthright Hindus stood aghast. The little fat Ethiopian porter strolled past, smiling curiously.

* All gifts such as these are the result of a combination of natural body aptitude, and constant practice, which impresses on the subconscious (including the spinal cord and nerve ganglions) the "habit" which makes the "practice" almost or entirely automatic. Thus, we say that a person has the "gift of juggling" or of knife-throwing, when he displays more than usual ability. The Wizard's magic silver cases might be likened to recorded habits, which are transferred to the body and brain of the person touching them by some electrical means, such as is utilized, in theory, at the U. S. Naval Training School, in teaching officers while asleep by means of an instrument called the hypnobioscope. It seems logical that such a means could be concentrated in one powerful impression.—Ed.

"Get me the knives," Montgomery said to an attendant at his elbow. "I'll try the target from ten paces."

The party moved closer to the opening between the pillars. One of the striped servants ran back to report to his master.

"Your Excellency, he missed with every knife, always in the same radius. He suspects you have given him a false skill."

Presently another attendant hurried across the garden in a frenzy.

"Your Excellency," he panted, "now he throws from only ten paces, but he still misses the mark by the same distance as before!"

"The same distance!" the Wizard cried. "He should now miss by only *half* the distance!"

The bewildered A-Kalpa-Reevil took refuge in an incantation, then ordered his servants to go back and watch like hawks. They obeyed nervously. Snorting angrily, the Wizard strode off in the other direction to a triangular window, to question the girl who could read brain-power at a glance. Something was playing havoc with his plans.

At ten paces the knives continued to streak through the air. After each miss, the American planted his fists on his hips and spat on the ground with a convincing show of dismay.

Again an attendant removed the twelve knives from the target and returned them to Montgomery, venturing to make a suggestion.

"Don't be discouraged. Your skill will soon take effect. You should try from still closer. Here—five paces." He indicated a mark just inside the pillars.

Jim Montgomery grinned inwardly. "I'm way ahead of you, you overgrown potato bug!" Aloud he said, "Wait a minute. I've just discovered what's wrong. Look!"

HE wet his thumb and held it up, as if to detect the slight breeze sifting through the courtyard. Every mystified face was on him. Even the servant whose hand waited behind the pillar was fully absorbed.

"The breeze fouled my aim," Montgomery said, disgustedly.

The sweating Hindus looked at each other like ten question marks. If there was any breeze they couldn't feel it.

"I'll prove my point," said Montgomery. "I'll stick a paper on this blade and see how much farther I miss."

He examined his pockets and finally brought out his billfold.

"Here, this'll do."

All eyes bulged as he drew forth a fresh ten-dollar bill and pierced the blade of a knife through the center of it. He shook his wrist—and the bill fluttered. Montgomery looked displeased. He pressed another bill over the blade. That was better. He poised the knife in his fingertips.

"But—but that's money!" gasped the attendant with the tray.

"So what?" said Montgomery. "It's still good. Whoever gets it can have it."

He let the knife fly. Ten striped uniforms literally flew after it. A wild scramble of eager guards crashed against the target.

Montgomery leaped to the pillar, snapped the lever, and a huge curtain of iron bars smashed down with a heavy clang. The ten attendants, tangled in a dog fight, looked up utterly dismayed to find themselves locked in their own doghouse.

Montgomery whirled about, snatched up a handful of knives from the spilled tray, slipped them through his belt as he raced down a line of columns toward a corner where he had seen a coil of rope. Rope would be useful. The maze of tunnels through which he had entered this place was too tortuous to figure in his plans for escape. A rope might solve the problem. He caught it up, then—

"Hands up!" the Wizard called at his shoulder.

There was nothing to do but obey. An unseen alcove had proved to be Montgomery's undoing. The realization struck him that the walls around this garden were probably glugged with traps that the Wizard had planned for moments like this.

To the American's astonishment, it was not A-Kalpa-Reevil who held the gun on him, but the round little Ethiopian porter, smiling complacently. The Wizard, who stood behind his minion, stepped forward to remove the knives.

A few minutes later Montgomery was also in a "doghouse," looking across the court through iron bars.

As his captors departed, the Wizard of Skills turned back to taunt him.

"When I have need of a knife-thrower, I'll call on you. But don't be in a hurry. My deaf porter is good for several years yet, and he possesses my favorite gift. He can beat any gunman in the world to the draw."

CHAPTER IV

Knives Out of the Darkness

BEHIND the bars Jim Montgomery marked off the days. Every waking hour was a fight between his inherent good humor and sudden helpless bursts of rage. He talked aloud to himself to keep his morale up.

He watched the daily run of customers who came with fat wallets and left with shabby wares—skills that the Wizard didn't care to keep.

He ceased to pay any attention to the attendants who came and went, or to the deaf Negro porter who waddled past now and then, smiling curiously. Neither was he bothered by the Wizard, who was content to idle in his Court of Magic, commanding every luxury that wealth could buy. And yet, Reevil appeared trou-

bled and spent much time in brooding. . . .

Unfortunately, Montgomery couldn't see the triangular window. He only knew that Ruth Marigold was still there, for he saw food being brought to her quarters daily. After a week of imprisonment he began to appreciate how desperate she must be for her freedom. Had she lost hope?

Montgomery boiled to free the girl from this mystic underworld. But how? He wasn't getting around so well himself these days.

Only the nights brought hope—in the form of a mysterious visitor. The first night Montgomery was awakened by a low insistent voice.

"You must escape," the mesage had been.

Montgomery thought the words were a dream. The first rays of morning light came to reveal a strange calling card lying on the floor just inside the bar—a knife.

The second night the voice woke him again.

"The girl wishes you to escape."

Montgomery's heart jumped. In the pitch darkness his groping hand found another knife.

Night after night the visitor returned for a brief moment. His form was too indistinct to be identified, but his short, whispered messages were crystal clear—words of encouragement and advice, and frequently an expression of friendship from the girl.

At last Montgomery had twelve knives concealed within his cell, and in his heart were the words of the mysterious visitor.

"You must watch for your chance."

The next night, as Montgomery lay awake, waiting for the mysterious visitor to come again, he saw dim lights from the Court of Magic and heard the patter of footsteps approaching. They stopped before the cell next to his. And then he listened to a strange conversation. He had not known that A-Kalpa-Reevil had found sleep impossible of late, because of a haunting worry.

Day and night the suspicion had gnawed at the great Reevil that someone among his helpers desired his downfall. Countless bits of evidence sharpened his fears that a traitor was at work.

Every time he had questioned the American girl to find out whether any brain within these walls, other than his own, burned brightly, she gave the same negative answer.

This only added to his suspicions. The girl must be lying to him. He would kill her with pleasure, if he was sure what she was up to. Her answer regarding the American knife-thrower still rankled in his breast, for the trick the young American had sprung on the guards was no simpleton's inspiration.

So A-Kalpa-Reevil had racked his brain for a way to check up on the girl's secret art, and at last he believed he had it.

HE called to the man in the cell next to Montgomery's and flashed a light on him.

"Lamblock, wake up! A-Kalpa-Reevil calls you.

Would you like to be set free?"

"Free?" The sleeping man came to life on the instant.

"Then listen to me. Is your skill of measuring yet sharp? Can you still measure with the naked eye to a thousandth of an inch?"

"Yes," said Lamblock eagerly. "Finer than that."

"Then you could surely measure the contractions of the pupil of an eye under changing lights."

"Of course."

"Good. I'll send attendants for you at once. They'll bring you to the Court of Magic, and after you've performed, I'll set you free."

Signals sounded, a few lights went on, and soon the Court of Magic was alive with striped uniforms. Everyone in the Wizard's domain, except the prisoners behind bars, reported for the general assembly.

When all were present, the Wizard had them form in a single file and march past the American girl's window.

It was an unpleasant ritual for all participants, though none was so frightened as Ruth Marigold herself, who was at a loss to understand why she must witness this weird parade of illuminated heads in the middle of the night.

The Wizard snapped off all lights except one which glowed in the American girl's eyes. Near the triangular window stood a ragged, starved-looking individual with glassy eyes who stared at Ruth Marigold as if hypnotized. The procession trailed along in single file between the man and the girl. Humiliating as it was, no one voiced any complaints. However unreasonable their master's whims, they had to humor him.

When the procession ended, the Wizard ordered everyone back to bed except the few attendants on guard. Then he took Lamblock into his private chamber for a conference.

"You saw her eyes when I walked past her? What happened?"

"It was very strange," said the prisoner. "Her pupils were much smaller while you were before her."

"And what happened when the others passed?"

"A trifle smaller each time that one passed, but never so small as when you went by."

"Never?" The Wizard fairly exploded with eagerness.

"Never except once—"

"Who?" the Wizard screamed.

"The Ethiopian porter. He caused her pupils to contract much more than you did."

A-Kalpa-Reevil clawed the air over his head and screeched his Hindu incantations and curses like a man in an agony of hatred. Minutes passed before the peak of his jealous rage was spent, and still his arms trembled. At last he took an ivory handled revolver from an ebony drawer and tottered out of the chamber to the dim green lights of the Court of Magic.

Lamblock followed at his heels. "Your Excellency, my freedom—"

(Continued on page 93)

»»» Introducing ««« THE AUTHOR

DON WILCOX

Author of

THE ROBOT PERIL

I HAVE flirted with writing for several years. A quarter of a century ago while in grade school at Lucas, Kansas, I became a partner in the Fairview Avenue Express, a one-tablet-page daily newspaper; circulation, ten. The daily story was lifted from a rhetoric book of correction exercises; we used the before-correction paragraphs, whose startling slang and crazy punctuation made novel reading.

As a printer's devil, I came closer to the fascinating mysteries back of the printed page. The mystery, for example, of the district judge's weekly notes, scrawled on envelopes cut open—gems from a noble mind but packed in handwriting that encouraged originality on my part.

I printed several kid papers. In later years I never felt settled except when at work on some literary or other creative effort. (I've hobbled a little at sketching pictures and writing music, chiefly for my own amazement.)

I believe the vast amount of drudgery I let myself in for (it still seems vast) must have bent me toward writing. When you cut sunflowers out of the corn your mind is free to daydream. So it was with shocking wheat, pitching bundles, tramping enslang. These summer diversions began early; farm labor was scarce during the War.

Later, my college vacations brought similar thought-churning exercises. Though a victim of the rural philosophy which exalts simple hard work to the skies, once I had the sweat glowing from the brow, the vacuum within became a playground for chance ideas. If you are a professional window washer or house painter, you know what I mean. Those silent hours of work contain some curious creative experiences, seldom brought to light.

However, if you are working with others—well, that's even better. Outdoor workers love to spin yarns. I found the errant harvest hands and the multi-colored rock crusher gangs full of stories—good and bad; also full of character, open to observation. There was the silent boy who watched over our rock trench. He and the sleepy old chimpanzee at the zoo could have changed places; no one would have noticed the difference. There was Lame John, a ragged haggled-toothed Negro, who taught me to swing the maul so the rocks would crack instead of rounding off. He managed his finances like an expert, bought winter groceries in July, was proud that he'd lost only three of his ten kids.

Perhaps these sidelights are incidental. Most of my hours have gone into academic pursuits. School teaching—more years than I dare count—then more university life, undertaken in '34 with a professional writing career now clearly in view. By this time I had published a few plays.

While a graduate student, I placed some articles with the Kansas City Star, sold a novelty musical comedy, captured some prizes in the Kansas Authors Club contests; dropped into a university instructorship in sociology (as a result of the state's economy program), which gave me contacts with many fine minds, young and old. I glimpsed endless avenues of research that lay waiting, tried a little, found it intriguing. It made you throb with the feeling that you were doing something vital—the same as our space explorers and laboratory heroes of fiction. Still, it did not answer my craving for creative activity. I borrowed time from research and paper grading to work on plays and (unfinished) novels.

In the fall of '38, after three years of university teaching, I plunged

into the jungles of free lancing, bringing my family to Chicago. True to the law which governs such ventures, I stumbled upon several false trails, some of them costly. Chicago life was spiced with last-thin-dime days now and then, the sort that authors are fond of describing afterwards.

However, a chance meeting with the editor of AMAZING STORIES proved to be a milestone. His generous suggestions were calculated to put an end to the blind stabbing of dizzy free lancers, give direction to their efforts. This he did for me.

This sketch needs a supplement in which the pronoun "I" is omitted, to tell the great share which parents, relatives, friends, teachers, and editors have had in giving me a start. My wife is my chief critic and assistant. Some of our work appears in her name. Our two-year-old red-haired daughter furnishes the diversion.

I appreciate the reception the readers of this magazine have given my stories.—Don Wilcox, Chicago, Illinois.

FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER, JR.

Author of

THE TIME MERCHANT

TIME is a favorite subject in science-fiction. Some of our most interesting stories have to do with going backward or forward in time. But I think we have overlooked a most salient feature . . . man's conception of time.

We are all familiar with incidents . . . at the dentist's, say . . . when time drags. And when we're enjoying ourselves, time flies. Physically, time has neither speeded up nor slowed down, has preserved its inexorable rhythm . . . but our mental conception of it has made it seem longer or shorter. The curious thing is that there are no physical phenomena to bear it out. Thus at the dentist's, the doctor's movements do not seem to be in slow motion; and at a party the people do not appear to be racing furiously, moving at top speed. Yet while clock-time is constant, and physical actions normal, one period seems interminable, the other is over before you realize it has passed. The only conclusion, therefore, is that our mental time-sense has been distorted, just as though we were under the influence of hashish.

This is the basis for *The Time Merchant*. A great gift for the world, a chance to make hours of tedious work seem only minutes, to make intervals of fun, enjoyment, seem ten times as long. The very reverse of present conditions when work-hours seem dreary, endless, and recreation slips all too swiftly by. This priceless secret of time-control falls into unscrupulous hands, and through it, a man who lusts for power seeks to gain world domination. To give this great treasure to the world until mankind has become dependent upon it, then threaten to cease supplying it unless his demands are granted, assures him of vast power. But a deck of cards, a clever girl, and that very time of which he boasts himself master, combine to save mankind from becoming slaves of time. I hope you like it.—Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr.

R. R. WINTERBOTHAM

Author of

CAPTIVES OF THE VOID

WHEN science fiction first began to appear more than a decade ago, I bought a copy—of AMAZING STORIES, I believe—at a

newsstand. I read it quite amazedly and never bought another until 1934, when the NRA gave me so much time that I read everything in sight.

Previous to this, as you may have guessed, I was born. I had quite a time of it, I was told—the wind blew and it was an awful struggle, like everything else. But I haven't been ill since. And that was Aug. 1, 1904.

I attended public schools, excepting one year spent in a military academy. I learned to read and the first books I read were Robinson Crusoe and Nick Carter (yes, I liked the "Oz" books and everything else). I think the story about Nick Carter going down into a volcano got me interested in science fiction. I would have liked that yarn better if Nick had found a lot of blue devils down in the bottom.

When I went to the University of Kansas, I determined to follow my father's and my grandfather's footsteps and become a doctor. Two years later, I got my grades—fifteen hours of straight "D's." It was too much of a struggle. I pulled out and went to Kansas City. For quite a while I lived on damaged cookies discarded by the Loose-Wiles Biscuit Company in the bottoms near the stockyards. I slept in a room filled with bedbugs and it was nearly zero weather without heat. Suddenly I ran across a friend of mine who also was broke, but he had a model-T Ford. We sold the Ford and hit for home.

I hadn't been home two days when the editor of the local newspaper called me on the telephone. He said he needed a reporter and offered me \$10 a week. I had never reported in my life, but I took the job. I was fired twice, but I took a correspondence course in journalism and came off the job a thoroughbred newspaperman.

I returned to the University of Kansas. Several years later when my sister attended the university they were still talking about her brother who would write a theme, a term paper or a master's thesis for \$1 per thousand words and get good grades. They say I made \$30 per week, but this is an exaggeration. I made that only one week. Finally, I graduated.

I decided nothing was too good for me, so I went to Chicago, where the World's Greatest Newspapers were published. There I went to sleep on an elevated train and slept into a job as a reporter for the Evanston News-Index. It's too long a story to put here, but I literally slept into the job and they hired me because my name was Winterbotham. thinking, of course, I was related to the Chicago Winterbothams. The relationship is very vague, although my grandfather said something about it once.

I was offered a job on a magazine and I left the paper, but the

magazine bired someone else while I was in Kansas for a short vacation. Again I went to Kansas City and nearly starved. With a traveling man, I started touring the state of Kansas and eventually landed a job with E. Haldeman-Julius of Girard, as circulation manager for his three magazines. One day I was asked to write a Little Blue Book about Lindbergh. To everyone's surprise it sold rather well and I did two others: "Curious and Unusual Love Affairs" and "Curious and Unusual Deaths."

I wrote quite a bit and then tried my first venture at free lancing. I went broke again and got a job in Albuquerque, N. M., until the Little Blue Books wanted me to come back. I left again to work as police reporter on a paper in Champaign, Ill. Then I came back to Girard and left again, this time to work in Oklahoma. Then I came to Pittsburg.

In 1934 I wrote my first science-fiction story, after deciding I liked it. I wrote another and then another. The third one sold to a leading magazine. It was "The Star that Would Not Behave," which my critics tell me was a woeful example of literature. Up to that time I had written 42 pieces of fiction without selling a single one, although I had written considerable non-fiction and sold it. It was nearly a year from May, 1935, when I made my first sale, until I began selling regularly. I sold considerable science-fiction and in addition I sold westerns, detective stories, adventure stories and comic strip continuities. Last month I sold more than 60,000 words, although I did most of it on assignment, and four of the stories were comic strip continuities. The only strip I have on the stands now is "Tim Todd, the Boy Detective," appearing serially in Super Comics, although my sequence of "Clyde Beatty, Dare Devil Lion Tamer," and "Gene Autry," probably will be on the stands when this is published. I don't know what magazines will print them.

The funny part of it all is, that I wouldn't give up my newspaper job if I sold 100,000 words a month. All of my ideas, pseudo-science and all, come from my visits with people in the line of duty. I tried free lancing about a year ago and I sold only 50,000 words in seven months. Then I came back to my old job and started selling again.

I like science-fiction because I think I can tell readers a lot of things in an entertaining way. The only message I have to offer in all of my stories is: "Life is hard, life is earnest, but it is funny as the dickens and I like it."

The best retort to this is the comment a man made on the street the other day, when he saw a copy of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES in my pocket.

"Do you read that magazine?" he asked. "It's a bunch of damn lies!"—R. R. Winterbotham, Pittsburg, Kansas.

SONS OF THE DELUGE

by Nelson S. Bond

A COMPLETE, FULL-LENGTH NOVEL

Legends say that Lemuria sank beneath the waves 12,000 years ago! . . . but, what if time reverses itself and those 12,000 years cease to exist? Can history be changed? See for yourself . . . travel in imagination and exciting adventure with two young, daring American soldiers of fortune to a world that DID EXIST 12,000 years ago! Don't fail to read this sensational new novel beginning in the gigantic, thrill-packed

★ **JANUARY ISSUE** ★
JUST OUT!
 AT ALL LEADING NEWSSTANDS

AMAZING
STORIES

Quiz Page

THE following quiz has been prepared as a pleasant means of testing your knowledge of things fantastic and scientific. We offer it solely for the pleasure it gives you, and with the hope that it will provide you with many bits of information that will help you to enjoy the stories in this magazine. If you rate 60% correct in your answers, you are considerably ahead of the average.

BRAIN TEST

1. Solder is an alloy of how many metals? Name them.
2. Why don't water and oil mix?
3. Name the planets in their order of the distance from the sun.
4. What is the only known animal that can fly?
5. What is the commercial value of the cochineal bug?
6. From what mammal is ambergris obtained?
7. What element does radium finally turn to?
8. What insects are used by other insects for their milk?
9. What is blue litmus paper used to test for?
10. What is the chief delicacy of silk worms?



MATCH THESE!

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| () 1—Horology | A—The study of insects. |
| () 2—Joule | B—A twin-hulled boat. |
| () 3—Coccyx | C—An extinct reptile. |
| () 4—Laudanum | D—Type of germs that cause disease. |
| () 5—Pyrethrum | E—A type of radio. |
| () 6—Anthrax | F—Atom smasher. |
| () 7—Vitreoous humor | G—Disease of sheep. |
| () 8—Catamaran | H—Science dealing with time-pieces. |
| () 9—Pathogenic | I—Small bone at the end of the spinal column. |
| () 10—Superheterodyne | J—Found mechanical equivalent of heat. |
| () 11—Entomology | K—Tuberculosis of the skin. |
| () 12—Pterodactyl | L—Used as an insecticide. |
| () 13—Trypanosomes | M—Mixture of opium and alcohol. |
| () 14—Lupus | N—Found in the eye. |
| () 15—Cyclotron | O—Cause of sleeping sickness. |



I.Q. TEST

There is a mistake in all the statements below. Can you find them?

1. The tiny humming bird dove to the ground, walked to its prey, snatched it and flew forward into the sky.

2. On my trip to the Arctic I found the Eskimos to be very friendly. I received from them small trinkets and a pet penguin.

3. After the mosquito stung me he flew out the window into the night air.

4. The pig looked up into the sky at the Martian space ship and squealed in dismay.

5. At the circus we saw many freaks; the strangest and funniest of all was a cross-eyed rooster.



A MATTER OF CHOICE

1. If you had Bright's disease you'd know you were suffering from—(1) an ingrown toenail, (2) falling hair, (3) inflammation of the kidneys, (4) gallstones.

2. When you're told you have large pinnas you know they are referring to your—(1) eyes, (2) feet, (3) lips, (4) ears.

3. The camelopard comes from the continent of—(1) Africa, (2) Asia, (3) Australia.

4. The name Ursa Major applies to—(1) a chord in music, (2) a title of rank in the Germany army, (3) one of the moons of Uranus, (4) the big dipper.

5. If a ring is marked 18K it is—(1) 100 %, (2) 25%, (3) 75%, (4) 50% pure gold.

6. If milk turns sour you know it's because of—(1) thunderstorms, (2) the lactose turning to lactic acid, (3) loss of casein due to evaporation, (4) a lack of nitrogen.

7. A good example of a carnivorous plant would be—(1) a carnation, (2) a century plant, (3) a vine, (4) Venus's fly-trap.

8. The best way for an airplane to take off is—(1) into the wind, (2) with the wind, (3) to wait until the wind stops, (4) across the wind.

9. Fehlings solution is used in tests to show the presence of—(1) sugar, (2) starches, (3) fats, (4) mineral matter.

10. If the air is atmosphere then a corresponding word for water would be—(1) bathosphere, (2) hydrosphere, (3) stratosphere, (4) hemisphere.

11. The pitch of a sound is determined by—(1) its loudness, (2) its number of vibrations, (3) its amplitude, (4) its softness.

12. The dark part of a shadow is—(1) the umbra, (2) the penumbra, (3) vibration point, (4) angle of incidence.

13. When the volume is kept constant the pressure coefficient is—(1) the same, (2) greatly different, (3) slightly different, (4) less. This is a law of—(1) Charles, (2) Gay-Lussac, (3) Pascal, (4) Faraday.

14. The fuel in a Diesel engine is fired by—(1) spark plugs, (2) expansion of gas, (3) compression of gas, (4) bunsen burners.

15. If you found a "squeegee plate" the best person to give it to would be—(1) a chemist, (2) a stunt man, (3) a photographer, (4) a cook.

(See page 94 for answers)

READER'S PAGE

EVERY STORY A DANDY

Sirs:

Have just finished the November issue of *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES*, and liked it so well that I just couldn't resist writing to congratulate you on this fine issue. Every story was a dandy, and I was delighted to see Stanton Coblenz in print again.

The cover by Robert Fuqua was wonderful. Let's have more covers of this type by him! Your new inside artist, Kenneth J. Reeve (or was that another alias for Krupa?) was excellent.

I have been reading *Scientific Fiction* since 1926, and this is my first letter to an editor. Can any other *Sci. fiction* reader heat that?

Eddie Smart,
Mt. Vernon, Maine.

LIKES UNHAPPY ENDING

Sirs:

Although of the *weaker sex* and unmarried (though that is not my fault), I am sending in my vote in hopes of proving that the men can't get all the luck.

I have several reasons for selecting Polton Cross's story for the best. The major one is the ending. I applaud an author who is not afraid to portray real life and use common sense in ending his story not quite so perfectly for all concerned. Not that I'd like all stories ending unhappily, but one like this is really refreshing. One keeps expecting the hero to be saved miraculously at the end when he speaks of a desperate experiment, and it comes as quite a shock that he does not survive.

When I began this story I feared that it was another of those "atomic power" things, and was relieved that the author introduced his spatial power—something different. I think it presents interesting possibilities.

My third reason is that I think the number one story ought to live up to the name of the magazine—and if a man returning from the dead isn't fantastic, I don't know what is!

Barbara Ott Shryock,
317 Cherry Bend,
Merion, Penna.

THE ELECTRON TELESCOPE

Sirs:

I enjoyed the July issue very much. Your discussion on the Editor's Page about the electron telescope intrigued me greatly, as I have been thinking some about the problem myself, and I would like to add a few ideas that might help.

In the first place, I should think it would add to the sharpness of the images if the photoelectric material were applied in an even coating on a sheet of graphite or some similar material, making countless individual but microscopic cells, as the molecular structure of graphite causes it to transmit electricity much better in one direction than another. Then, not to lose the advantage we have there gained, we could use no wires, allowing the electrons to jump into a vacuum behind the plate of graphite.

Focusing by magnets and photographic films would complete the apparatus. While this might very likely not work, it would be much more of a precision instrument than the one you suggested. Thank you again for the July issue of *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES*.

Selden G. Thomas,
The Lake Clear Camp,
Lake Clear, N. Y.

PRAISE AND REPROOF

Sirs:

Eando Binder really knows how to write something different. This is the first time I have heard of a man's eyesight being three minutes too late.

I think this is the poorest issue of *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* you have published so far. It contains one story that does not even deserve to be put in a science fiction magazine. It is "The Amazing Invention of Wilherforce Weems," and the title does not fit the story, as Mr. Weems did not *invent* the fluid, he *discovered* it. The best thing to do with it is to throw it in the ash can. "City Under the Sea" sounds as if it was written by some amateur. Also, every story took place in the past or present; none in the future. I think it would be a great improvement on your magazine if you would use more interplanetary space travel, future, and fourth dimension stories. Keep up the back cover work; Frank R. Paul's paintings actually sell the magazine to me. I expect to see a much better magazine for Volume 1, No. 4, and a cover that does not look like the cover on a detective magazine.

Albert Wagner,
1482 Lincoln Street,
Berkeley, California.

FIFTEEN YEAR OLD VETERAN

Sirs:

First, let me vote for Finlay to do your back cover paintings. Really, though, there is little choice among the better of those you mentioned. They are all good, Paul in particular. But, as I have said, make mine Virgil Finlay.

With that out of the way, a little helpful criticism would be in line. Right now, I am a little short of being fifteen years old, yet I consider myself almost a veteran reader of *AMAZING STORIES*, having started at the age of eight. I have not missed an issue since you fellows took over, and I want to give you my congratulations on a swell job. However, I don't like policies, yours not excepted. F. A. is fine, but why don't you get it out monthly? I realize that it's not very scientific, but I also realize that it's not supposed to be, so I won't complain on that score. Well, here's to even better issues in the future.

Thos. P. Ellington,
Box 5345,
Jacksonville, Florida.

We ARE monthly now! You will find FANTASTIC ADVENTURES on the stands the 10th of each month from now on.—Ed.

COMPLETELY TAKEN IN

Sirs:

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, popping up from nowhere seemed to do something to all of us. Having just finished the September issue I felt that I just must give voice to my opinions of this new SF.

I must say that, like everyone else, I have been completely taken in with Paul's marvelous series on the back of the mag. They're tops and don't let anyone tell you different.

In this issue you came out with some really good stories and the "Golden Girl of Kalendar" was just about as fine in its line as they come. The description was swell and the plot well developed, in my opinion. Of course many may differ with me, and I sure would like someone to take another viewpoint and argue with me in the Reader's Page—let's go, friends!

"Horror Out of Carthage" was well written but for some reason did not appeal to me like the other. It seemed to dwell more on the material than the spiritual and that detracted some from the story.

Be a Food Distributor

QUICK PROFITS!

Own a steady route distributing delicious food products. Fine profits at once and all year 'round with Complete Display Outfit and proven money making plan. Fast selling, quick repeating foods and other home necessities—over 200 nationally known, guaranteed products. Full or part time. No experience needed. Liberal credit plan. Old reliable company. Write for full particulars.



E. J. MILLS,
8087 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio

FREE SAMPLES OF REMARKABLE TREATMENT FOR Stomach Ulcers

(Due to Gastric Hyperacidity)



H. H. Bromley of Shelburne, Vt., writes: "I suffered for 10 years with acid-stomach trouble. Doctors all told me I had ulcers and would have to diet the rest of my life. Before taking your treatment I weighed 135 pounds and could eat nothing but soft foods and milk. Now after taking Your Tablets, I weigh 171 pounds, can eat almost anything and feel perfectly well." If you suffer from indigestion, gastritis, heartburn, flatulence or any other stomach trouble, due to gastric acidity, write for prompt relief. Send for FREE Samples of this wonderful treatment and details of guaranteed trial offer. Instructive booklet is included. Write

PHILADELPHIA VON CO.

Dept. 715-F

Box Bldg., Philadelphia, Pa.



DO YOU WANT TO STOP TOBACCO?
Rebels the craving for tobacco as thousands have. Make yourself free and happy with Tobacco Reducers. It's a subtle, safe, not habit forming. Write for free booklet telling of important effects of tobacco and dependable easy way to relieve the craving. **FREE BOOK**
Newell Pharmaceutical Co., Dept. 609, St. Louis, Mo.

MAKE MORE MONEY

Taking Orders For The NIMROD Line

Make more every day in the year representing old established firm with a complete line of fast selling necessities: Shirts, Ties, Underwear, Hosiery, Pajamas, Bathrobes, Sweaters, Jackets, Pants, Belts, Bras, etc., etc. Wholesale, Retail, Cash, C.O.D. Terms, etc., every item guaranteed. Experience unnecessary.

FREE SELLING EQUIPMENT

NIMROD COMPANY,
4822 W. Lincoln Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Flush Poisons From Kidneys and Stop Getting Up Nights

Be Healthier, Happier — Live Longer

When you can get for 35 cents a safe, efficient and harmless stimulant and diuretic that should flush from your kidneys the waste matter, poisons and acid that are now doing you harm, why continue to break your restful sleep by getting up through the night?

Don't be an EASY MARK and accept a substitute—Ask for Gold Medal Haarem Oil Capsules—right from Haarem in Holland. GET GOLD MEDAL—the original—the genuine. Look for the Gold Medal on the box—35 cents.

Other symptoms of weak kidneys and irritated bladder may be backache, watery eyes, shifting pains, burning or scanty passage.

McCauley is a good artist and knows his stuff, but if he would use just a little less shading and heavy stuff, I feel that his drawings would be greatly improved.

These smooth pages are just the thing and the size of this new mag. is perfect. However don't get over-excited—and don't forget to get us into space once in a while.

Ned Will,
98 E. Tulane Rd.,
Columbus, Ohio.

OUR READER-EDITOR!

Sirs:

The story content of the September FANTASTIC is somewhat improved over the first two issues. "Golden Girl of Kalendar" by F. Orlin Tremaine gets my vote for first place. It easily lives up to your title and policy—fantastic adventure. It is somewhat reminiscent of Merritt. Surely a sequel is forthcoming.

In my order of preference are: "The Man Who Saw Too Late," "The Amazing Invention of Wilberforce Weems," "The Insect Invasion," "Horror Out of Carthage," and "City Under the Sea." Binder has a unique idea in his story. I never thought of the possibility of such a situation before. Humorous tales such as Bond's are very welcome. Both Hamilton and Schachner have done much better before.

McCauley has a nice smooth style and I hope to see more of his work in the future, but the September cover would better fit on a gang story magazine. The covers of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES should be fantastic. The back covers by Paul live up to this description. No matter how good a lineup of stories you have inside the magazine you won't attract new readers unless you can get them to read these stories. Names help if the buyer has read them before, but you've got to attract the stranger to FANTASTIC ADVENTURES with an illustration that commands instant attention. Something colorful and fantastic; something that begs to be picked up, looked into. The inside drawings could be improved upon also. Jackson seems to be hopeless as a fantasy artist. You might have done better to place Tremaine's story first in the magazine.

Jack Darrow,
3847 N. Francisco Av.,
Chicago, Illinois.

WANTS SCIENCE

Sirs:

FANTASTIC is a good adventure magazine and this issue is hardly anything but that. Why not make it a pure science-fiction magazine? Then you would have a ready market without having to try for the "blood and thunder" trade.

When FANTASTIC first came out I thought that the fans were in for a treat but it seems that the likes of the ordinary action-pulp readers are determining what stories are printed.

Therefore, I am one reader who will

remain unsatisfied until FANTASTIC "returns to the fold."

George P. Calvert,
3355 1/2 Woodland Avenue,
Williamsport, Pa.

WHO WANTS SCIENCE?

Sirs:

I have been a reader of your magazine from its first issue (old veteran fan—that's me!) and am now taking occasion to comment upon it—the September issue in particular.

Although they are as different as two fantasy tales could be, "The Amazing Invention of Wilberforce Weems" and "Horror Out of Carthage" were, in my mind, tied for first place. The second place I assigned to "The Man Who Saw Too Late," which was an enjoyable tale, with an interesting idea logically developed and well treated. It was followed by "The Insect Invasion." The last places I assigned to "City Under the Sea" and "Golden Girl of Kalendar," which were, however, fair.

I was sorry to see that "The Monster From Nowhere" was in the last place in preceding issue, as in my mind it was the best in the issue.

May I register one protest against your policy of discontinuing weird tales like "The Mummy of Ret-Seh." I thought said story one of the best you've ever published. What gave these readers the idea that FANTASTIC ADVENTURES has to be a science-fiction magazine?

Although (as some very active fans can testify) there is no more enthusiastic advocate of temponautics (consult your Latin expert) than myself. I think making Khor an American was one of the worst mistakes I've seen for years. Whose idea was it anyway? Yours or Kummer's?

I disapprove of your \$10 contest. It tends to bring the idea of conformity to an average to science-fiction, one of the fields which is the nearest being free from it.

Robert G. Thompson,
Editor of Science-Fiction
Miscellany,
44 Norgate Road,
Manhasset, N. Y.

Here are two readers who say exactly the opposite. However, your editors have found that the majority of our readers approve of sticking to the implication of our title.—Ed.

TITLE PORTRAYED

Sirs:

It seems to me that no other story in your magazine could portray such adventures in the field of atomic power, combined with a glance beyond there, as "The Man From Hell" by Polton Cross.

The very title of your magazine is portrayed in this story by the fantastic adventures of Dale Bradford.

I enjoy FANTASTIC ADVENTURES very much.

Donald F. Campbell,
Farmington, Iowa.

A WALKAWAY!

Sirs:

It's "F.O.B. Venus" by twenty lengths. Nelson S. Bond gave me a set of characters, as human as a handclasp, who yanked me right down into the paper.

And did they jab a ray-gun into my belly and try to tell me? Hell, they grabbed me by the seat of the pants, heaved me smack into that wheezy old space-lugger and said, "There's Mr. Biggs, fellow; now let's see what you can do about him."

And I loved it! Honest to God, I laughed right out loud. . . . And those guttaws, to get oldish, were as welcome as the nose-licking aroma of fried chicken amongst the gory pages of death, gutted Koolahs, nasty dirty villains and the hoary mistaken-identity theme (even though very well done).

How the hell can you analyze a yarn that pulls you right into it and makes you do all the work—and have all the fun?

For me, it's still "F.O.B. Venus" by twenty lengths—and don't forget to tell Mr. Bond!

A. R. McKenzie,
Itasca, Illinois.

ORIGINALITY

Sirs:

I want to thank you for publishing my letter in your magazine. I was surprised to see it in the "Readers' Page," and that is putting it mildly. The fourth issue was great (maybe because of the above), but the other three were still better.

However, I am not influenced by that, and there are only two good fantasy publications in America, the leading one is FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, I think. For a newcomer, Henry Gade seems to be fairly good. I selected Thornton Ayre's story, "Lunar Intrigue," because it belongs in FANTASTIC, and as I said before he is a swell fantasy writer.

I read with interest Mrs. Gene Zwick's comments. Well, I don't own every book written by Edgar R. Burroughs, as yet, nevertheless I have over fifteen "Tarzan," six "Martian," two "Venus," and two adventure stories by him. I almost forgot to include a Big Little Book named, "The Tarzan Twins."

Regarding Mr. Langley Searles' remarks about the originality of titles, I too used to have nearly the same idea. Moreover, I wrote up a list of stories alike either in names, plot, or type. For example: "Knights of the Desert" by W. D. Hoffman and "Knights of the Range" by Zane Grey. However, I finally realized practically everything in this universe is not original, new, different, or startling. FANTASTIC is far from being something out of the ordinary.

But I sincerely like it just the same. Very much so. By the way, your new magazines are as interesting as AMAZING and FANTASTIC, if not

better. I mean South Sea Stories and Air Adventures, of course, the one of the South Seas and of the Air.

Glenn W. Roberts,
4427 N. Parkside Ave.,
Chicago, Illinois.

Not better, but just as good, we'll guarantee!—Ed.

WHY INSECTS AND FISH MEN?

Sirs:


"The Golden Girl of Kalender" equals, if not better, "The Golden Amazon." It not only touches the Science Fiction theme, but also contains enough adventure and mystery, to make it the best, to my opinion, in this issue.

This is the third issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES which I have read. I am an old Science Fiction fan, dating back to the Hugo Gernsback days, and I must say that your magazine is the first one that has drawn any opinion out of me. May I congratulate you on your splendid publication? I am somewhat of a pseudo scientist myself dealing in the experimentation of light sensitive bodies and radium active material, so that is why I suppose the story I selected appealed to me.

There is a question I have always wanted to ask the editors of Science Fiction: "Why do all authors imagine every creature on other planets either fish men, intelligent insects or weird monsters? What proof are their pictures based on, other than theory and why could not their imagination picture some easier creatures to look at? Why do the Science Fiction magazines allow their artists to paint such gaudy horror pictures on your covers, making them stand out like the old dime novels? Surely Science Fiction is not in that class and is too conservative, too splendid for such bizarre covers. Could not the Publisher sort of compare stories of the future, with the intelligence of the scientific mind, and ease down on guns of death, goblins, etc. I would also like to see intelligent beings live between the lines of interplanetary stories, and once in a while, have the natives of other planets want peace instead of horrible invasion. Is not the conflict between elements and man sufficient? We are having enough war on earth than to have it in the heavens. Couldn't these other natives be as intelligent looking as we are? Are we so conceited that we believe Earth so much farther advanced in evolution than any other world in the solar system? Surely we are but one little speck in this immensity of space. Science Fiction is among the intelligent works of art, so why not make the covers compare to the contents.

Lloyd S. Marshall,
122 West 32nd St.,
Los Angeles, Calif.

Scientists have always said that it is logical to believe that life on other planets would take a vastly different course than on earth, simply because the environment is so vastly different. Perhaps that is why our authors people the planets with non-humans.—Ed.



TRAIN FOR A GOOD PAY JOB IN ELECTRICITY
ON REAL MOTORS. GENERATORS. ETC.

12 WEEKS'
"Learn by Doing" Training
Right Here in Coyne Shops
I'LL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING

Send coupon now and I'll tell you all about my quick, easy way to train for your start for a better job and a real future in the great field of ELECTRICITY. I'll not only tell you about my training but I'll tell you how you can get this training without laying out a lot of money. You can get training first by making a small down payment—then start paying for most of it in easy monthly payments starting 30 days after your regular training period is over. My training—plus my unusual offer—is your chance to get started towards a real job and a real future. Don't dream about better pay and a good job—prepare now to get it.

QUICKER, EASIER WAY

Here in my big COYNE Chicago training shops you are trained on real electrical machinery and equipment—not by correspondence or embarrassing reciting but by actual Practical work. First you are told how to do a thing—Then you are shown how to do it—Then you do the work yourself under the guidance of expert instructors. By my method of instruction you don't need previous experience or advanced education.

PART TIME WORK WHILE TRAINING
EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AFTER GRADUATION

If you are short of money and need part-time work to help pay for your room and board while training, our Employment Department will help you get a part-time job. After graduation, we will give you a Real Life Loan Employment Service.

GET THE FACTS

Don't let lack of money keep you from sending the Coupon NOW. My Big FREE COYNE Book is full of facts and photographs which tell you about COYNE Practical Training and how you can get this training first, and pay for it later. It shows you how easy it is to learn by the COYNE method. It will also tell you about my part-time work plan—about my graduate employment service, lifetime membership privileges and many other facts you will want to know. Don't delay—mail coupon TODAY.

Training in DIESEL, Electric Refrigeration
and Air Conditioning—NO EXTRA COST

MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY
H. C. LEWIS, President, COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
506 S. Paulina St. Dept. 99-66 Chicago, Ill.
Please send me your Big Free Book and details of your "Pay Tuition After Graduation Plan" and other plans to help a fellow get ahead.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____



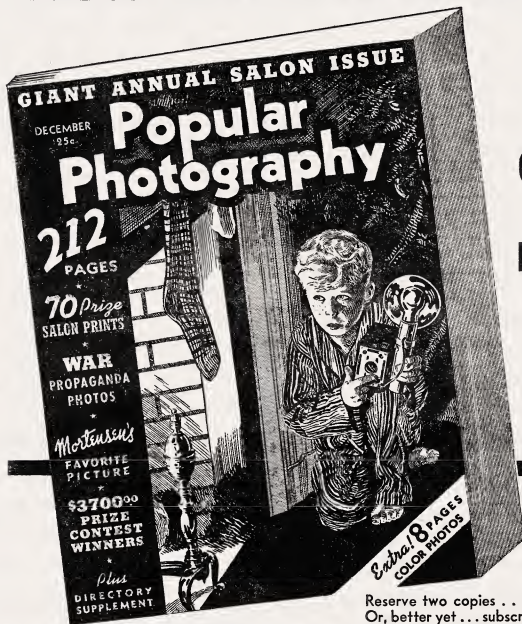
Boy! G-MAN OUTFIT with LIE DETECTOR

This big G-Man science outfit contains radical lie detector, fingerprint, secret dial. Earn this amazing cash, make MONEY! movies, printing press, typewriter, or any of 300 other handy prizes.

winning prize, make MONEY! It's easy. Just deliver our popular magazine to each house in your neighborhood. You secure in your neighborhood a big prize each as a model advertiser. Lie first day. To start, rush out giving me (see) to Jim Thayer, Dept. 519, 122 West 32nd St., Springfield, Ohio.

Don't miss this chance to win a big prize. Rush out giving me (see) to Jim Thayer, Dept. 519, 122 West 32nd St., Springfield, Ohio.

The Greatest Issue IN PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY!



**NOW
ON SALE
At All
Newsstands**

**MAKE SURE OF
YOUR COPY**

YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS THIS BIG DECEMBER ISSUE!

It's the greatest, yes, and the most spectacular photographic magazine ever published! No camera owner, amateur or professional, can afford to miss this magnificent issue! 212 pages . . . 379 outstanding pictures, 8 pages in natural color . . . and 33 fascinating features, make the December Salon Issue of POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY the greatest value in photographic magazines ever offered. Get your copy NOW! Remember, the price remains at only 25c!

Reserve two copies . . . one to read, one to file. Or, better yet . . . subscribe NOW . . . starting with the GIANT ANNUAL SALON ISSUE. Take advantage of our special introductory offer to new subscribers: 6 issues for only \$1.00.

AVOID A SELLOUT—USE THIS COUPON

POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY
608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

I certainly want to take advantage of your special introductory offer to new subscribers! Here's my dollar! Please send me 6 issues of POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY, beginning with the GIANT ANNUAL SALON ISSUE.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY & STATE

THE GIFT OF MAGIC

(Continued from page 83)

"I've changed my mind!" the Wizard snarled. He called for the attendants.

LAMBLOCK wailed his protest. "But your Excellency, you promised me—"

"Silence! Get back to your cell!" A-Kalpa-Reevil punctuated his snarl with a flourish of the revolver. Two attendants lost no time in ushering the man back to the arcade.

Up to this minute, Jim Montgomery had been utterly bewildered by the nocturnal chaos of unnatural sights and sounds. But the meaning of Lamblock's appeal was perfectly clear. A mean trick, that promise of freedom. He could see Lamblock's guards approaching. Two flashlights were held on the luckless fellow and probably guns as well.

Suddenly Lamblock whirled about, cursing hysterically, and plowed into one of the Hindus with flying fists. For an instant the prisoner and his two jailers were down in a rolling heap. Then one of the guards scrambled to his feet and recovered his flashlight. He steadied it on the scuffle with one hand, pointed his revolver with the other, contracted his trigger finger—

A knife hissed through the air then. The revolver fell, and a sharp cry rang out.

Crossbeams of light revealed the tangle of figures in a life and death struggle. Finally a dark hand came up clutching a gun, and again Lamblock stared agonizingly at certain death. Then another blade sang through the blackness. The brown hand relaxed, its weapon clattering to the floor.

Another instant and Lamblock was before Jim Montgomery's cell, panting but triumphant.

"I got their key to the cells! Let's make a break—"

"Unlock every cell door!" the American ordered. "I'll drop a rope from the top of the wall."

The clanking of opened cell doors echoed back to the sleepy attendants on guard at the Court of Magic like a bad dream.

A-Kalpa-Reevil, the Wizard, crossing the courtyard, was too intent upon his own line of action to notice the disturbance. Two anticipated murders awaited his final decision.

Ordinarily the Wizard would have taken two killings in his stride, but tonight an inner turmoil had seized him. How best to handle the traitorous Ethiopian porter? Reevil stopped at the door near the magic wall, clutching his gun. He was caught between boldness and fear—fear of the porter's swifter draw.

His eye lighted upon a small lever high on the wall, a switch he had never touched, for it would set off an explosive planted under the porter's room. It had been concealed there to cut off the escape of prisoners, should an emergency arise. The Wizard's fingers twitched with eagerness.

An instant later, an attendant crawled into view, bleeding from a knife wound.

"The prisoners!" he croaked. "They're out—going over the wall—"

The Wizard's eyes popped. He rang the wall alarm for an emergency. Then, without a second's hesitation, he clutched the explosion lever. A dull roar reverberated through the cavernous corridors.

THE Wizard's eyes gleamed with malicious satisfaction. He knew the remedy for trouble-makers, all right! Confident the battle was as good as over, he strode off toward the door of the American girl's quarters, his pearl-handled revolver in one hand, a key in the other. The key turned—

A familiar voice made his whole gross body shudder.

"Drop that gun, Reevil! You're covered!"

The Wizard obeyed, trembling. Out of the cloud of smoke from the explosion waddled the round little Ethiopian porter, sniffing the fresh air.

Watching from a shadowed corner, Montgomery saw the two men face each other. The porter smiled enigmatically; the Wizard was obviously terrified. Montgomery withheld his ready knife, puzzled to discover that not all was well between these two. The Ethiopian, with his deadly draw was the American's most formidable enemy. But strangely enough the squat little black man seemed content to hold his gun squarely on the tall, ornamented figure in the doorway.

Menacingly the Ethiopian porter advanced toward A-Kalpa-Reevil, his voice purring.

"You imagined you could explode me to hell, your Excellency? You still underestimate my resourcefulness, perhaps?"

The terrorized Wizard began to wash his brown fingers with sweating hands.

Abruptly the porter's attitude changed. "Save your prayers," he snapped. "Your type of magic has seen its day."

"You—you wouldn't dare!"

"That's what you'd like to think," the Ethiopian sneered. "I've served you in silence, out of loyalty to the greatest Wizard who ever lived—your honored father. But the years have changed things. You've taunted me for my deafness, bullied me, murdered my friends. Now the tables turn. The Wizard of Skills, indeed! I know every trick that you know. The magic belongs to this place—not to you! When you're gone, I'll run it—and without murders or jails. Now Mijah-Skuhl-A-Kalpa-Reevil—"

The porter advanced, still smiling. His gun hung loosely in his fingers.

From the distant fight a shot sounded. By an ironical trick of fate, a silver capsule jumped out of the wall and struck the porter's gun from his hand. His round little body swung down to get it. In a flash the Wizard jerked the knife from the door and flung it with a deadly accuracy at the Ethiopian's back.

Clang! Within a foot of its mark, it angled off, struck by another knife from out of the shadows. The two blades rang harmlessly against the magic wall.

(Concluded on page 95)

THE GIFT OF MAGIC

(Continued from page 93)

The effect on A-Kalpa-Reevil was almost comical. Rooted to the spot, he began to tremble as if his gross body were in the contortions of an esthetic dance. Great beads of sweat stippled his pasty face, and his bulbous eyes were a mirror of abject terror.

Smiling grimly, Jim Montgomery emerged from the shadows.

"Greetings, your Excellency," he said. "You are perhaps amazed at my skill in the art of knife-throwing?"

"Not half so amazed," snapped the Ethiopian porter, "as he'll be when my revolver blasts out his ugly brains!"

THE Wizard was a master mind no longer.

"Mercy!" he screamed. "I will give you all that I possess! All the skills and—"

The porter fixed him with hard, relentless eyes.

"Your precious gifts are at an end," he said. "You are all finished with evil schemes. In a moment, you will be all finished with life. I am quite sure your honored father would approve. He, A-Kalpa-Reevil, was an ethical man."

"No, no!" wailed the Wizard. "Not death! Not—"

"You have a gun," snapped Jim Montgomery, disgusted. "Perhaps your former porter is not so fast-on the draw as you think. Perhaps I should not tell you this, but I am a believer in fair play. So—"

The Wizard took the bait like a drowning man a wisp of straw. His eyes gleamed with treachery. His sensuous lips lifted back in a vicious snarl. Like a jackal, his tall, fleshy body tensed itself for the kill.

With a wild scream, A-Kalpa-Reevil grabbed for his revolver. But even as his fat fingers clutched the butt, a smashing slug crashed head-on into the middle of the pasty forehead, broke through flesh and skull, and imbedded itself deep in the Wizard's brain.

Half checked, the death cry that bubbled involuntarily from A-Kalpa-Reevil's throat died aborning. With a spasmodic jerk he clapped both hands to his bleeding head, the gun clattering from his nerveless fingers. Then he was down, a gross figure of a man, a weltering corpse in the evil of his own blood.

But Jim Montgomery and the porter were not the only witnesses at this death scene. Ruth Marigold, a little wan but with shining eyes, had emerged from her prison cell. A kind of triumph shone in her eyes. She would always remember that just before the Wizard relaxed after his last death-spasm, the red light encompassing his head changed to green, and then slowly vanished altogether. . . .

By now, A-Kalpa-Reevil's minions in striped uniforms were in an agony to save their own skins. Spying eyes had reported the death of their all-powerful master. Now, never having been trained to use their own initiative, they were an army of mercenaries, anx-

ious only to find another leader to do their thinking.

Montgomery and the Ethiopian advanced among them with determined steps. At a nod from the latter, the young American stepped forward to quell the frightened stampede.

"Halt!" he shouted. "Your lives will be instantly forfeit if you do not instantly obey your new master's every command."

Slowly the mad quarreling died away, as the terrified attendants halted in their hysteria at this strident note of authority.

Montgomery quickly pressed his advantage. "Good!" said he. "You have but to obey, and you will always be taken care of. Now—I introduce to you your new leader. Follow his wishes implicitly!"

The American nodded, and the Ethiopian stepped forward, calm determination in his honest face.

Terror and suspicion wiped away from the faces of the guards. As one man, they accepted their new master. There was scarcely a flicker in their dim brains, Ruth Marigold noticed, as they shifted their allegiance to the new Wizard—the patient, smiling little deaf man.

For these minions, these hirelings, could hate or love, make war or make peace, according to the dictates of any leader smart enough and capable enough of command.

All events must come to an end. Thus it was that the new monarch of the Court of Magic shook hands with Jim Montgomery and Ruth Marigold when the two young people took their leave. The new Wizard saw to it personally that a ladder was provided for their ascent over the wall. There would be steps on the other side.

"Good-by," said the former Ethiopian porter, and his smile was a sad one. "I am sorry to see you go, because you are true friends. But I know"—he smiled wisely—"I know that the pattern of your lives is now clear, and I rejoice that it is so."

RUTH blushed furiously, and the young American looked uncomfortable, as any healthy male would under the circumstances.

Jim Montgomery gulped. "Ruth—" he began. "Hell, darling, I'm crazy about you!"

Eyes shining, the girl came into his arms.

"That isn't very original," she whispered. "But somehow, I like it!"

So they did what any young couple in love would do.

"But, Jim," Ruth was saying as they walked afterward through the dawn-painted bazaars of Calcutta, "what brought you to the Court of Magic, to begin with?"

Jim Montgomery grinned hugely. "It may have been telepathy," he said. "‘Beautiful maiden in distress. Young blood rides to the rescue!’ But maybe I sound conceited, darling. Maybe that Ethiopian porter took pity on you, and did the only thing he could think of—get word through to the office of the American consul. I'm an investigator."



A NAZI SHALL DIE!

"... Lichter, damn his soul, killed my father in the last war—twenty-one years ago. I'll kill that Nazi if it is the last thing I do!" ... thus a deep hatred rules the lives of two daring, young pilots fighting on the Western front! Don't fail to read this exciting air story based on today's war!

8 THRILLING STORIES! ALL COMPLETE—Including:

★ **TREACHERY OVER THE MAGINOT LINE**—"You're damned right it stinks, you rotten, yellow rat!" Larry Wilson started for the enemy pilot... but—!

★ **THE COWARD**—Stringer laughed. "Me a spy? Hell, no! Would I be breaking my neck to knock down these barbarians if I were?"

★ **WINGS ABOVE WARSAW**—Carradine wasn't going to let a Dictator's bluff keep him from flying back to England! No sir!

★ **WHY GERMANY CANNOT WIN**—by Major Roger Sherman Hoar. A brilliant discussion and forecast by an outstanding military expert. Don't miss it!

Plus **MANY OTHER FEATURES & ARTICLES**

THE VERY LATEST IN AIR-WAR STORIES... published and edited by aviation experts.

AIR

ONLY **15¢** AT ANY
NEWSSTAND

ADVENTURES

Just Out!

1st ISSUE NOW ON SALE

• LIFE ON JUPITER •

By **HENRY GADE**

(See back cover painting by Frank R. Paul)

On our back cover this month we present the artist's conception of the inhabitants of the planet Jupiter, deduced in imagination from scientific facts about that world as astronomers know them

Jupiter is by far the largest of all the planets, in fact being larger than all of them combined. This in itself assures the fact that any living being on this world would be vastly different than any we would encounter on any of the other worlds. But in order to understand just what form this life would take, it is necessary to understand the conditions on this giant world.

Its mean distance from the sun is 483,000,000 miles. Its sidereal period is 11.86 years, and the synodic is 399 days, which means that Jupiter comes to opposition a month and four days later each year.

Jupiter is distinctly oval, having an equatorial diameter of 88,200 miles, while its polar diameter is 83,000 miles. Its mean diameter is 86,500 miles, which is very nearly eleven times that of earth. It has a mass of 316 times that of earth. However, its density is less than one fourth that of earth, but exactly equal to that of the sun. On Jupiter, a surface gravity pull of $2\frac{2}{3}$ that of earth exists, but it varies, as much as 20%, between equator and poles, due to its rapid rotation.

The planet's atmosphere is extremely extensive. Some astronomers hold that it is a liquid planet, and that all we see are atmospheric conditions, hiding the real surface. However, its gravity and its mass make it extremely logical that areas of solid earth are quite possible, and indeed, to be expected.

One of the most mysterious features of Jupiter is its so-called "Red Spot". This spot is "sub-permanent", insofar as its appearance is concerned, since it apparently fades at times until it becomes only a ghost of itself. However, it seems to retain its general shape, and although its period of rotation changes, indicating that it is a floating area, it is possible that it indicates a more solid mass than the rest of the planet.

There are many things about the planet that indicate a high temperature. For instance, the abundance of clouds and their swift transformations. With all this shade, and the fact that the planet receives from the sun only $1/277$ of the heat received by earth, it seems that the planet itself is possessed of internal heat, since its luminosity definitely is greater than it should be by simple reflection of sunlight. Indications are that this is not due to any radio-active condition. With this intense cloud blanket, there would exist a great degree of condensation, which would mean a heated, humid climate. Nor would any great amount of heat radiate away.

Considering all these scientific factors, the man of Jupiter would be a massive creature of tremendous strength, built along lines that would enable him to move about under the terrific gravity attraction of the planet.

He would not support his body on legs that would elevate him to any great degree off the surface, but would move by the dual motion of an undulating body, in contact with the earth, and supplementary legs of short, stocky, powerful nature.

He would be heavily armored, possibly with a thick, leathery hide that even a rifle bullet might have trouble penetrating. To a great degree, his torso might be constructed as is that of a turtle, with heavy plates on the under side, to allow for constant scraping and dragging along the surface.

The main portion of the body might always remain prone, with only the forepart possessing the ability to raise itself. The entire body would be stocky and heavy, and joints would be constructed on an overlapping, interlocking scale system.

In such a world, due to the great heat, the Jovian would be enabled, by means of sharp teeth, to eat things of a herbivorous nature, such as wood, tough fibres, in addition to the usual carnivorous diet of a primitive world in which growth is rampant and lush.

The Jovian would not be a great fighter. He would be slow, ponderous, and too bulky to maneuver about. However, he would be more than a match for any earth beast, since Jovian gravity would almost prostrate an earth being.

The earthman who visits Jupiter, must be careful to take along with him a small tractor car with very powerful motors. If he does not, he will be helpless to move about since he would weigh in the neighborhood of six hundred pounds on the surface of this giant world.

Also, in the dense atmosphere, which would be impossible to breathe, with his weak lung muscles, he would have to devise his own air supply, in an air-tight tractor-car. In order to speak, he would need an amplifier, to make sounds loud enough to vibrate the heavy air. Lacking such equipment, he could not leave his space ship.

Lacking initiative, which would be depressed by the great energy expended in merely moving about, the Jovian would not demonstrate any great animosity to the visiting earthman, but merely tolerate any creature that did not directly harm them. At best, they would exhibit only momentary curiosity. Intelligence would be low.

**DON'T FORGET! FANTASTIC ADVENTURES
IS NOW A MONTHLY**

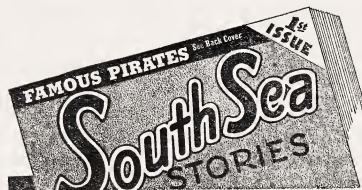
GET YOUR COPY AT YOUR NEWSSTAND THE 20th OF EACH MONTH

"TAKE YOUR CHOICE

for \$40.00"



Her word was LAW with 70,000 battle-hardened pirates! She ruled with an iron hand! Yet Hsi-Kai had a softer side . . . the woman showed through this relentless pirate as she sold the captured women to her men . . . for forty dollars apiece! Don't fail to read the **QUEEN OF THE PIRATES** . . . an exciting, true story brimming with adventure, romance, and action of the South Seas! But, it's just one of the many stirring stories gathered between the covers of this amazing **NEW MAGAZINE** . . . the only one of its kind in the world!



6 EXCITING STORIES of Adventure & Romance ALL COMPLETE!

- ★ **BLOOD WILL TELL**—All hell broke loose on the Island of Avulla when the white and native girl fought for the love of handsome young Allen!
- ★ **TWO MEN AND A GIRL**—Donald Campbell considered Aigwa as his native wife . . . but, he didn't realize his wife believed in bigamy!
- ★ **THE END OF KING PENNY**—King Penny deserved the horrible vengeance of the tribe for his crime against the chief's daughter.
- ★ **SOUTH SEA DICTATOR**—"Damn it!" he roared, "let her alone! Can't you see she doesn't want to . . .?" Larry McQuinn faced the most daring character in the South Seas, a slaver and a pirate!
- ★ **THE STRANGE TREASURE OF AH MUN**—What priceless treasure was it that Ah Mun wanted salvaged? Pierre Fournier would kill a hundred men to get it. Pemberton knew it, but took the job anyway!

**NOW ON SALE AT
ALL NEWSSTANDS**

BILL, YOU SURE HAVE A SWELL BUILD! DID YOU TRAIN FOR A LONG TIME?



ABSOLUTELY NOT! THE ATLAS DYNAMIC TENSION SYSTEM MAKES MUSCLES GROW FAST!

Here's the Kind of MEN I Build!

Charles Atlas

An actual, untouched photo of Charles Atlas, twice winner of the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." Send your photo this 7-DAY TRIAL OFFER.



J. G. O'BRIEN
1st Place
Club Winner
First of California
Atlas' California
Champion

Will You Let Me PROVE I Can Make YOU a New Man?

MEN—Meet J. G. O'Brien, of California, one of my Silver Cup Winners! Look at that strong neck—those broad, handsome, perfectly proportioned shoulders—that muscled chest and stomach. Read what he says: "Look at me NOW! Dynamic Tension WORKS! I'm proud of the natural, easy way you have made me an 'Atlas Champion!'"



This Sterling Silver Cup Being Given Away

This valuable cup stands about 11" high on a high, mahogany base. I will award it to my pupil who makes the most improvement in his development within the next three months.

Do you want a better build? Are you dissatisfied with your present physical development? Then listen—All I ask is a 7-DAY TRIAL. Let me show to you—in even that short time—that I can give you the kind of body men respect and women admire!

I was once a skinny weakling of 97 lbs. I didn't know what real health or strength were. I was afraid to fight, ashamed to be seen in a swimming suit.

Then I discovered the secret that changed me into "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man," the title I won twice and have held ever since, against all comers. My secret is Dynamic Tension. It is a natural method. Its purpose is not only to give you the powerful, rippling muscles you'd like to see in your own mirror, but also—for those whose

systems are sluggish for lack of proper exercise—to help them tone their entire body, inside and out. Just give me a week! Make me prove—in even that short time—that continuing with my Dynamic Tension method will make a New Man of you: give you bodily power and drive, and put you in magnificent physical condition which wins you the envy and respect of everyone.

FREE BOOK ON DYNAMIC TENSION

Let me show you the results produced for other men. I'll send you FREE my famous book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It shows actual photos. Write your name and address carefully on coupon. Mail to me personally today. I'll rush your free copy to you AT ONCE! Charles Atlas, Dept. 99, 112 E. 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.



CHARLES ATLAS

Dept. 99, 112 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of Dynamic Tension will help make me a New Man—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your FREE book, "Everlasting Health and Strength" and full details about your 7-DAY trial offer.

Name (Please print or write plainly)

Address

City

State

LIFE ON JUPITER

Jupiter's inhabitants would need to be massive, of tremendous strength to cope with the enormous gravity of this giant world. They would probably be forced to a clumsy means of locomotion, since long legs would be impossible. An Earthman would need a tractor car to get about

For complete details, see page 97
FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, JANUARY, 1940



Another Scan
from

Great Green Zifikus

